

= Clifton Down railway station =

Clifton Down railway station is on the Severn Beach Line and serves the district of Clifton in Bristol , England . It is 3 @. @ 9 miles (6 @. @ 3 km) from Bristol Temple Meads . Its three letter station code is CFN . The station has two platforms , each serving trains in one direction only . As of 2015 it is managed by Great Western Railway , which is the third franchise to be responsible for the station since privatisation in 1997 . They provide all train services at the station , mainly a train every forty minutes in each direction between Bristol Temple Meads and Avonmouth .

The station was opened in 1874 by the Great Western and Midland Railways as part of the Clifton Extension Railway , designed to connect the port of Avonmouth to the national rail network . The station had a large gothic revival building on the Bristol @-@ bound platform , with smaller passenger facilities on the opposite platform and a goods yard beyond . Between 1903 and 1930 the station employed an average of 22 staff . Excursion trains were a regular sight , bringing people to nearby Bristol Zoo .

The Severn Beach Line declined over the latter half of the twentieth century , with passenger numbers falling significantly . Goods services at Clifton Down ended in 1965 , and all staff were withdrawn in 1967 . The line was largely reduced to single track in 1970 , leaving Clifton Down as one of the few passing places . Services had decreased to ten per day each direction by 2005 , but have since increased to twenty @-@ four trains per day .

= = Description = =

Clifton Down railway station is on the Severn Beach Line , serving the district of Clifton in Bristol . The station is located on the busy shopping street Whiteladies Road , next door to a shopping centre . The wider area is largely residential . Bristol Zoo is under a mile away . The station is located 3 miles 72 chains (6 @. @ 3 km) along the line from Bristol Temple Meads , and 9 miles 51 chains (15 @. @ 5 km) from Severn Beach . It is the fifth station from Temple Meads . There are two running lines , roughly oriented east @-@ west , but curving towards the north at both ends . There are two 120 @-@ yard (110 m) -long platforms to the north and south of the running lines , connected by a footbridge at the east end . The southern platform , Platform 1 , serves trains towards Avonmouth , the northern platform , Platform 2 , serves trains towards Temple Meads . The station is in an enclosed cutting , and runs under the road to the east . To the west is the Clifton Down Tunnel under Clifton Down , from which the station takes its name . The station is one of the few double track sections of the Severn Beach Line , and so is often used as a passing place .

Facilities at the station are minimal ? shelters , benches and timetable information are provided . Customer help points give live train information . There is no ticket office , and no self @-@ service ticket machines which can be used to buy or collect tickets . The station car park is to the north of the platforms , with 40 spaces . There is step @-@ free access to the northern platform from the car park , and a set of steps from the footbridge . There is also stepped access to the footbridge from the south , and a ramp down to the southern platform . There is no taxi rank , but there are bus stops on Whiteladies Road . Cycle storage is available on the platform .

The disused station building 's bricked @-@ up windows and doors feature artwork of animals created by students at Redland Green School , and promote links with nearby Bristol Zoo . The building is accessible from the car park , and houses an Australian @-@ themed pub . It is a Grade II listed building .

= = Services = =

Services at Clifton Down are all operated by Great Western Railway , mainly using diesel Class 150 Sprinter units , occasionally supplemented by Class 153 Super Sprinter and Class 158 Express Sprinter units . Until 2012 , Class 143 Pacer units were a regular sight , but these have mostly been moved south to work in Devon and Cornwall following a cascade of Class 150 / 1 units from London Midland and London Overground . Monday to Friday , three trains every two hours run from Bristol

Temple Meads to Avonmouth , with one extended to St Andrew 's Road and Severn Beach , giving a service at Clifton Down of one train in each direction every 40 minutes . Most services start at Bristol , but one evening service to Avonmouth begins at Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare . On Saturdays there is a similar level of service , but more trains continue to Severn Beach . Sunday sees a roughly hourly service to and from Bristol , with only two services extending to Severn Beach , except during the May ? September timetable period , when all services are extended . The first and last Sunday trains towards Bristol are extended to Taunton via Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare , and there are similar workings in the other direction .

As Clifton Down is the Severn Beach Line 's main passing point , trains to Avonmouth usually arrive at the same time as trains to Bristol Temple Meads . Most trains call at all stations , but some services omit Lawrence Hill . The typical journey time to Bristol Temple Meads is roughly 20 minutes , and 14 minutes to Avonmouth . In 2012 , the single fare to Temple Meads was £ 1 @. @ 50 , and £ 3 return for the whole line .

= = History = =

= = = Joint railway era = = =

The Clifton Extension Railway was opened from Narrowways Hill Junction to Clifton Down as a joint venture between the Great Western Railway and Midland Railway to connect their main lines to the Bristol Port Railway and Pier in the Avon Gorge . Clifton Down railway station opened on 1 October 1874 , when passenger services began , and was for a while the terminal station . It was the second station along the line from Narrowways Hill Junction where the Extension Railway left the Bristol and South Wales Union Railway 's main line to Wales . It remained the second station until Redland was opened in 1897 . The line was built at 4 ft 8 1 ? 2 in (1 @, @ 435 mm) standard gauge .

The station was built by Messrs Baker & Son of Canon 's Marsh , Bristol . The buildings , constructed in a Gothic Revival style , cost £ 20 @, @ 000 , with the main buildings on the northern platform . There was a large booking hall with sizeable fireplaces at each end . Pointed ground floor doorways gave access to the hall , which was adjacent to the booking offices and waiting rooms . It is believed that the station master 's lodgings in this building were never used as such . A wide carriage drive led down to the northern platform , which was linked to the southern platform by a glass @-@ covered footbridge . There was originally no waiting room on the southern platform , but one was built in October 1898 . The platforms were mostly covered by " ridge and furrow " glass roofs , supported by iron columns . The station was flooded in August 1883 , which resulted in the installation of extra drainage . There was a large goods yard to the south of the platforms , accessed from the west , with a 28 @-@ lever signal box at the west end of the southern platform .

The initial service provided at Clifton Down by the Midland Railway was to Fishponds and Mangotsfield , where passengers could change for services to Bath , Birmingham and other Midland destinations . The Great Western provided services from Clifton Down to Bristol Temple Meads , the city 's major station , where passengers could change for trains to London , Exeter and Wales , among others . The Great Western also provided occasional through services to Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare . There were a total of 23 trains in each direction between the two companies Monday @-@ Saturday . On Sundays , there was no Midland service , but seven Great Western trains . The fare to Temple Meads was 6d first @-@ class and 3d third @-@ class . The Clifton Down Tunnel , the final link to the Bristol Port Railway and Pier , was opened in 1877 , initially allowing freight trains to reach Avonmouth Docks . It was not until 1885 that it was cleared for passenger use , which allowed services to Avonmouth via Sea Mills and Shirehampton . There was a trial Midland service between Bristol St Philip 's and Avonmouth in September 1885 , but this was ended after a month . In 1886 , the daily Great Western service was six trains each way between Avonmouth and Temple Meads , 24 trains from Clifton Down to Temple Meads and 26 the other direction . The Midland provided 12 services from Clifton Down to Fishponds , and 11 back .

Clifton Down had large numbers of excursion trains , both arriving and departing . There were

regular trains during the summer season to Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare and Clevedon , as well as to Weymouth , London and , more locally , football specials to Ashton Gate . There were also regular excursion trains , known as " Monkey Specials " for visitors to the nearby Bristol Zoo . In 1886 , the Bath and West Show being held on Durdham Down generated some 33 @,@ 000 extra passengers over five days , with direct services from Bath Green Park and an extra 16 services from Temple Meads . The Show was held on Durdham Down again in 1921 , temporarily increasing traffic from Temple Meads by 12 trains per day , although there was increased competition from local bus services . The station also received visits from King Edward VII in 1902 and 1908 (the former as a prince) , and from a delegation of British Empire Prime Ministers in 1907 .

The line had initially been managed by the Clifton Extension Railway Joint Committee , but in 1894 the line 's management was passed to the Great Western & Midland Railways Joint Committee . In 1909 , the station master at Redland was withdrawn , his duties incorporated into the job of Clifton Down station master . In 1910 , Clifton Down saw 17 Great Western services from Avonmouth to Temple Meads and 15 the other way , a further 20 trains each day operating between Clifton and Temple Meads , and 13 Midland trains each way between Clifton and Fishponds or Mangotsfield . Midland services were suspended from 1 January 1917 to 15 May 1919 due to the First World War . The Hotwells section of the Bristol Port Railway and Pier closed in 1922 , so to compensate , an additional six trains were provided from Clifton Down to Avonmouth , and four back .

In 1923 , grouping resulted in the Midland Railway being absorbed into the London , Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) , and the line continued in a joint arrangement between the Great Western and the LMS . From 1924 , many trains to Avonmouth were extended to Severn Beach , a growing seaside resort , and some on to Pilning , then back to Temple Meads via Patchway . Between 1903 and 1930 the station employed an average of 22 staff , and in 1926 the station master assumed control over Montpellier as well . The platform canopies were partially removed in the 1930s , and bomb @-@ damage during the Bristol Blitz saw them cut back further . The war also saw the end of services to Fishponds and Mangotsfield , the last operating on 31 March 1941 . By 1947 , just before the start of the British Rail era , there were 33 services each direction between Avonmouth and Temple Meads , and 18 on Sundays . Some trains made circular trips to and from Temple Meads via Clifton Down and Henbury or Pilning .

= = = British Rail and privatisation = = =

When the railways were nationalised in 1948 , services at Clifton Down came under the aegis of the Western Region of British Railways , and there remained a strong staff presence in 1958 , with a station master , chief booking clerk , four other clerks , six porters , a shunter , a checker and a weighbridge assistant . Passenger numbers however dropped sharply in 1961 as the result of a fare increase , and so in 1962 a new reduced timetable was enacted , which lost more passengers , and saw the withdrawal of a special schoolchildren 's service . A year later in 1963 , the Beeching report suggested that all services along the Severn Beach Line be withdrawn . Following meetings with staff , it was decided to keep the line open to Severn Beach , but to close the section to Pilning , and also end services via Henbury . These services duly ended , and in July 1965 the goods yard at Clifton Down also closed . The line however was still threatened , and on 10 February 1967 it was announced that all services between Stapleton Road and Severn Beach would be discontinued . An enquiry followed , and in June that year the decision was reversed , on the condition that tickets be issued on the trains . Thus , on 17 July 1967 , all stations along the line , including Clifton Down , had their staff withdrawn . The decrease of costs allowed a reduction of ticket prices , but the line was still under threat until in June 1969 it was decided that the line 's closure would result in significant hardship , and so a grant was allocated to ensure continued services . Service levels however still declined : though the " Monkey Specials " were still going strong into the 1960s , with 340 @,@ 000 excursion passengers arriving between 1958 and 1966 , the closure of many of the Welsh Valley Lines and the construction of the Severn Bridge led to their demise in the early 1970s . Most of the Severn Beach Line was reduced to single track in late 1970 , leaving Clifton Down as one of the few passing places . The glass platform canopies were completely removed in May 1971

, and the glass @-@ covered footbridge was also removed , leaving a set of steps from Whiteladies road as the only access to the southern platform . In the late 1970s and the early 1980s , the Clifton Down Shopping Centre was built over most of the goods yard , the rest covered by a housing development .

British Rail was split into business @-@ led sectors in the 1980s , at which time operations at Clifton Down passed to Regional Railways . A programme of refurbishment was carried out in 1992 / 3 , including the installation of a new metal footbridge and ramp access to the southern platform . In December 1994 , the station building , which had been bricked up when staff were withdrawn , and was by then the Steam Tavern public house , was designated a grade II listed building , along with the screen walls . It is still in use as a pub , and has been called the Roo Bar since at least 2005 . At this time , all trains ran to Severn Beach , but the service pattern was irregular . This changed in 1995 when an hourly timetable was introduced for peak times , but services were terminated at Avonmouth , allowing a single Sprinter unit to work the service . There was a better service on Saturdays as more rolling stock was available , but there was no Sunday service . Talk arose again of the line being closed completely . Local tourism expert Bernard Lane described the line 's state as

... the line the railway wished was not there . It was the line that got bus substitution whenever they were short of trains or queues , when a rugby match in Cardiff needed a special . It has a problem in that the route is slow and not very direct ; for years it was invisible , short of marketing and lacking a regular interval timetable .

When the railway was privatised in 1997 , local services were franchised to Wales & West , which was succeeded by Wessex Trains , an arm of National Express , in 2001 . Following action by Friends of Severn Beach Railway (FOSBR) and a string of protests , services had increased to 10 per day in each direction by 2005 , with Bristol City Council providing a subsidy to Wessex Trains . The Wessex franchise was amalgamated with the Great Western franchise into the Greater Western franchise from 2006 , and responsibility passed to First Great Western , a subsidiary company of FirstGroup , rebranded in 2015 as Great Western Railway . A minimum service requirement was written into the franchise agreement , ensuring an hourly service along the line . In 2007 , the Council unanimously agreed to pay £ 450 @,@ 000 per annum to fund extra services from May 2008 for three years , which resulted in a 60 % increase in passenger numbers along the line , and a 110 % increase at Clifton Down . Sunday services to Severn Beach were restored in 2010 .

Passenger numbers at Clifton Down were further boosted by a marketing campaign by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership to attract more people , especially students , to use the station . The work won a Department for Transport Community Rail Marketing Award in 2007 . The Severnside CRP also formed a support group for the station , and improved the provision of timetabling information through the use of simplified departure timetable posters . In 2009 , they painted a large station sign on the road bridge over the line , and in 2010 they collaborated with Redland Green School to decorate the bricked @-@ up windows and doors of the station building with animal artwork to brighten up the station and promote Bristol Zoo . The work won a Community Rail Award . Customer help points with next train information screens were installed during 2008 / 09 , paid for by money from the Department for Transport 's " Access for All " fund and local councils . Ticket machines were installed in early 2011 , following complaints that passengers were unable to pay their fares .

= = Future = =

First Great Western declined a contractual option to continue the Greater Western passenger franchise (of which services at Clifton Down are a part) beyond 2013 , citing a desire for a longer @-@ term contract due to the impending upgrade to the Great Western Main Line . The franchise was put out to tender , but the process was halted and later scrapped due to the fallout from the collapse of the InterCity West Coast franchise competition . A two @-@ year franchise extension until September 2015 was agreed in October 2013 , and subsequently extended until March 2019 .

With the coming upgrade to the Great Western Main Line , the main line from London to Bristol is

due to be electrified by 2016 . However , the electrification will not extend beyond the main lines , so Clifton Down will continue to be served by diesel trains , with the current " Sprinter " units expected to be replaced by Class 165 and 166 " Turbo " units . Stephen Williams , MP for Bristol West , questioned whether electrification could continue to Clifton Down . Then @-@ Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond replied that it would have to be looked at in the future . The group Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways supports the electrification of the entire Severn Beach Line .

Improved services at Clifton Down are called for as part of the Greater Bristol Metro scheme , a rail transport plan which aims to enhance transport capacity in the Bristol area . There is an aspiration for half @-@ hourly services , with trains towards Bristol terminating alternately at Portishead and Bath Spa , however due to the large sections of the Severn Beach Line which are single @-@ track and to the congested main line from Temple Meads , such frequency is not currently feasible . 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 . There are also calls for the reopening of the Henbury Loop Line , which could allow a direct service from Clifton Down to Bristol Parkway via Avonmouth . Plans for a loop were rejected by the West of England Joint Transport Board , however Bristol City Councillors voted to send the decision back to the board for further discussion .