

Summary of Artefacts found in Clifton Rocks Railway

Maggie Shapland: Restoration Officer, Clifton Rocks Railway;
University of Bristol

We have been refurbishing Clifton Rocks Railway since Easter 2005. This started life as a cliff railway linking Hotwells to Clifton between 1893 and 1934, when it ceased operations as a funicular railway. From 1940 it had multiple war uses, as it was divided into sections by the Ministry of Works, for use by Imperial Airways to repair barrage balloons, use as a night time air raid shelter by the local residents, and by the BBC as a top secret transmitting station. Consequently, we have been finding items from all the different usage types.

Apart from clearing the rubble and debris, we have been searching under the sleeping ledges to see what the residents left behind, during their wartime stay. There are three refuge areas; two large and one small. The large areas each have sleeping ledges for about 90 people, with the small one having about 40, so there is a big area to search! Also, access is difficult due to the presence of a large amount of rubble.

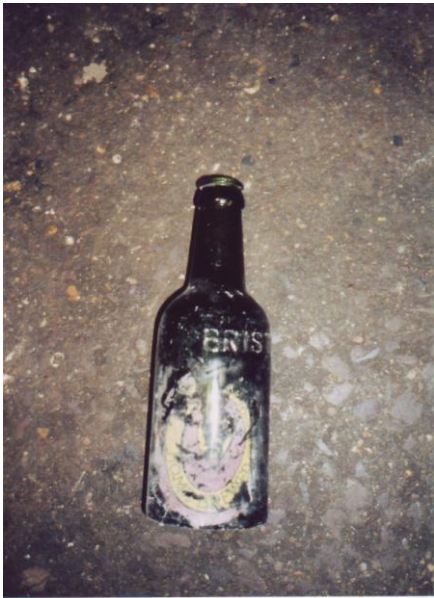
You will see that we have now put up more shelves to display the many artefacts we have found so far. It is a fascinating insight into life in the 1940's. The refuge ledges have yielded many bottles and china, as well as poignant items, such as civilian gas masks (still with charcoal granules inside), a pair of children's glasses, a lead soldier, a ball and a doll's head. So far, the bottles we have found

Type	Quantity
1/2pt beer bottle	8
1/2pt cider bottle	1
1/2pt soft drinks bottle	12
1/2pt milk bottle	7
1pt beer bottle	2
1pt soft drinks bottle	6
1pt milk bottle	5
1pt sherry bottle	2
2pt beer bottle	1
disinfectant bottle	2
Horlicks bottle	1
medicine bottle	5
spirit bottle	1
coffee essence bottle	5

This shows that soft drinks were the most popular beverage, but beer was undoubtedly popular, even though more women and children would have sheltered there than men. Bristol United was the most common beer bottle found (at least one bottle still has beer in it), and only one bottle was from Georges Brewery. In the old tunnel we discovered under Sion Hill from the railway, which had been bricked up in the wartime, we found a green glass bottle of Sunrisebrand beer from Ashton Gate Brewery, probably from the 1920's. This is complete with stopper and again presumably contains beer.

The sherry bottle is fascinating because it's label denotes it to hold Curfew sherry! Brooke and Prudencio (who made lemonade and ginger beer) have many styles of bottles, but also in evidence are lemonade bottles from Maps in Fishponds, and milk bottles from many local dairies. There is also a section on every day items such as medicines, flit sprays, Jeyes disinfectant, a Corporation of Bristol pencil, ink well and fountain pen.

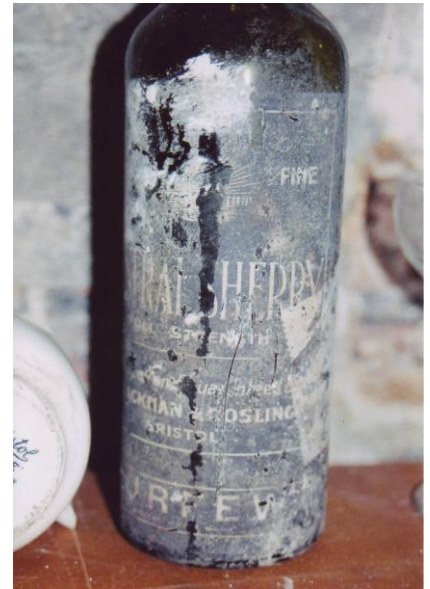
We also found many signs under the ledges and stairs, which are slowly being reassembled, because they have delaminated and fallen apart. We were particularly pleased to find "Shelter 1" in the top refuge area, and "Shelter 3" in the lowest one! Women's and Men's toilets have arrows pointing different ways, and we also found signs for "Management" and "Emergency". We had thought the complete sign was for "Emergency Management," but later finds proved the sign was for "Emergency Exit", this seems equally strange since one could only go up or down the stairs to get out. Possibly, since you were allowed to sleep on the steps if you did not have a pass, only one set of stairs was used.



*Bristol United Beer
(Lewins Mead)*



*Sunrisebrand Beer
(Ashton Gate)*



Curfew Sherry



*Brooke & Prudencio
(St Pauls)*



Ellisons mark on turnstile



Blakeborough Valve

The other sections show china, and items found in the BBC section, though not many, since we have not touched much of this area yet, but we do have the BBC kettle! Similarly, we do not have much from the Barrage Balloon Section. The railway section displays an Acme Thunderer whistle, a type of which is still used by present day referees, sight glasses from the bottom tank, gas light fittings, and the different types of glass used in the top station. Larger items are also displayed, such as the water valves, complete with pipe gaskets, to put water into the car, and the Ellison turnstiles, complete with counter covers to stop the guards from fiddling the ticket receipts! The wood on the turnstiles and barriers is in amazingly good condition

Have a look at <http://www.cliftonrocksrailway.org.uk> and http://www.b-i-a-s.org.uk/rocks_railway_refurbishment.html (for the restoration progress diaries) if you want to find out more about this amazing project.