

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS' VISIT TO CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE
4TH SEPTEMBER 2023

On an extremely hot day in early September, 14 intrepid Active Adventurers met at Clifton Suspension Bridge, Bristol, for a hard-hat tour of the bridge's vaults. Our very affable and entertaining tour guide, Gordon, first told us of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's plans to build the highest and longest bridge in the world and the difficulties he encountered with the design. It was explained how the design of the bridge was also shaped by others. He also demonstrated the principles of suspension using the two tallest and the two not so tall members of the group and a bicycle chain!

After making our way across the bridge and admiring the view, we went to the Visitor Centre where we donned hard-hats and high-viz jackets. To access the vaults, we had to descend a vertical ladder (15 rungs, I was told to count on the way down) and then entered the first vault. Inside, it was lovely and cool at 15 degrees, although wet underfoot from the calcite saturated water which drips from the ceiling. We then moved on through a low tunnel into a larger vault where we could admire the stalactites and stalagmites which had formed since the construction of the bridge began in 1831. Gordon asked for complete silence so that after a few moments we could hear the rumble of a vehicle overhead. We also learned about the people who built the bridge and those who rediscovered the vaults in 2002.

Ascending back up into the sunshine, the consensus was that we had all enjoyed an extremely interesting and fascinating historical tour, a unique experience for sure!

