

# The Lichfield Vaults

Church Street is split into two parts; the wider section from Cathedral Close up to East Street and the narrow passage which leads from there through into High Town. This, then, was the beginning of what was called in the thirteenth century Cabocheslone. In the fifteenth century the two parts were separately identified as Brode Cabeige Lane and Narowe Cabeige Lane, which was gentrified in the eighteenth century to Capuchin Lane. The nineteenth century saw it become Church Street with the narrow section being called, rather confusingly as it was furthest from the river, Lower Church Street.



*The Lichfield Vaults before the alterations*

In Church Street there is now only one inn between East Street and the Cathedral Close—the Lichfield Vaults which retains a prominent position on the east side of the street. At an earlier date it was called the Dog Inn, and as such was mentioned in 1782 and 1799. In September in the latter year it was advertised as being to let ‘That well-accustomed Public-house called the DOG, situate in Broad Capuchin-lane in the city...’ In 1851, when James Morgan was in charge, it was described as the Old Dog. However, the Dog was not shown on the 1858 city map or mentioned in the directory for that year, so the licence may lapsed for a while, but not for too long, as the Dog is mentioned in Littlebury’s Directory of 1867. Whatever was happening at that time, the name change occurred between 1876 and 1885. This was probably due to a change of lessee, for in 1914, when alterations were proposed, the proprietors were given as ‘The Lichfield Brewery Co. Ltd.’

Before the alterations took place, the ground floor plan consisted of a large L-shaped smoke room towards the rear of the building, which was approached by a long side passage. It was very much a meeting room with wall seating

and two fireplaces. At the front of the building was a minute public bar, about 8 feet long by 5 feet wide—smaller than a prison cell—and inevitably with standing room only. At that time the inn had a double gable to the front and the whole face had been rendered. The render was eventually removed to expose the original brick, but this was unsatisfactory and new ideas were sought.

The proposals were radical for 1914, as they envisaged one large room containing both bar and smoke room. Such a scheme may well have alienated the customers from both sides as a hand-written note was added to the plans to ensure that a screen was erected between the two parts. The proprietries were preserved and the separation between workmen and tradesmen was to continue at the Lichfield for another half-century.