

Elephant & Castle

Location: corner of Stafford Street and Cannock Road, Wolverhampton.

It was built in 1905 to replace an older pub on the same site. Its Edwardian design uses architectural ceramics called *faience*. In 1910 it was sold to Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, the largest brewery in the Black Country, and became part of Banks's pub estate. It was sold off in the 1990s, closed in 2000, and was knocked down in 2001.

Layout

The Elephant & Castle is set in 1960. The smoking room was designed for privacy and more middle-class customers, who paid a penny more for a pint; later on it was used on match days for away fans. The family who ran the pub lived had living quarters above the bar and where the kitchen is now. Banks's modernised the pub in 1976 – they knocked through the vaults and smoking room into one large room and installed a pool table.

3 Key Stories

1. A friendly meeting place for people from all over the world. The Black Country was booming and drawing workers from all over the world to meet the labour shortage. Irish workers found work in construction here by talking to the right people. Men from India working in nearby foundries met here to reminisce. Caribbean men working at the nearby bus garage met to play dominoes.
2. Guinness. Draft Guinness was introduced in Britain in 1959 but was not installed here until 1975. Many Irish drinkers at the E& preferred bottled Guinness to local draft beers. Bottled Guinness was brewed in London and driven to local breweries to be bottled, where labels were stamped by the brewery. This object represents the move towards mass production of alcohol.
3. Babycham. This sparkling perry was an instant hit when launched in 1953. It was marketed towards women, who often did not visit pubs – the campaign included special glasses, the chamois logo, and the first alcohol advert on TV, to give it a sophisticated image. This was the first step in changing the image of pubs away from a male-orientated environment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are the rooms laid out like this? Edwardian pubs commonly separated the working-class public bar (often called Vaults in the midlands) from the more private, more middle-class Smoking Room, where customers would pay slightly more so they didn't have to mix with the workers.

Who was the licensee? The licensee's name is not known in this year. They lived with their family in the upstairs and back rooms, where the lounge and kitchen are now. This was the most common way to run a pub, and the family would have done all the work, from cleaning to serving.

Why was it knocked down? The pub's owner knocked down the building before it could be listed.

How did BCLM rebuild it? We used a mixture of archived plans, family photographs and bricks salvaged from the site to design the building. We are grateful to former customers, landlords and their families for providing all the information to recreate the inside of the pub.

Is that the original Elephant? No – it is a replica based on photographs. The original was salvaged, but has not been donated. If it was, we would not display it outside for conservation purposes.

Why don't you serve food? Most pubs at this time were for drinking only – it was usually only possible to buy salty snacks like nuts, scratchings or crisps. It was only at the end of the 1960s that it became common for pubs to serve food, and even then it was mostly only filled cobs.

What objects are on display? Objects collected include Banks's branded dominoes, trays, glasses, mugs and cards. Bottles have been collected or reproduced from originals. The fireplace in the smoking room is from a house in Lower Gornal. The Minton tiles in the Cannock Road entrance were collected from a house in Stourbridge. The upstairs bar is from the Gypsy's Tent in Dudley. Much of the furniture has been donated by Marston's, current owners of Banks's.

Drinks in the Elephant & Castle display (underlined = also available for sale)

Banks's Mild – a malty ale, the most popular beer in the Black Country in 1960. Local brews were noticeably more bitter than other parts of Britain.

Banks's Bitter – pale ale in England gained this name when customers began referring to it as “bitter” in contrast to mild ale. Every Banks's pub sold both bitter and mild in large quantities.

Banks's Old Ale – a strong, malty beer. Banks's' was 9% ABV, available bottled or on draft in winter.

Banks's Imperial Pale Ale – a strong, hoppy ale, but not to be confused with India Pale Ale.

Bottled Guinness – Draft Guinness was introduced in England in 1959, but it was not installed at the E&C until about 1975. Before then, Guinness was brewed in London and delivered by tanker to Banks's brewery, where it was bottled, and the label stamped by the bottler.

Mann's Brown Ale – this widely popular ale was brewed by Watney Mann of London, which also produced the famous Watney's Red Barrel.

Babycham – this was launched in 1953 as a “champagne perry” by Showering's Brewery and was marketed heavily towards women.

Cherry B – this is a sweet cherry wine, launched by Britvic in early 1959 and available in still or sparkling. This was also marketed towards women, with special tall glasses. Blackcurrant B was introduced in February 1960.

Wine, port, sherry

Wines were not particularly popular in working-class pubs, though most still stocked ports, sherries and a small range of wines, bottled by the brewery. Banks's bottled only French wines.

Liggin's Royal Velvet port – this is an example bottled by Mitchell's & Butler's in Smethwick.

Sauternes – a white wine from the Graves region of France popular with Banks's customers

Moet & Chandon – this might have been an unusual site in 1960s Wolverhampton! These 1955 bottles were part of a BCLM staff member's parents' wedding celebrations.

Whiskey

All whiskies in a 1960 pub like this would have been blends, as single malt was too expensive.

Haig Dimple whisky – Haig was Britain's best-selling whiskey brand. Dimple was introduced in 1893 and was James Bond's preferred whiskey in Ian Fleming's original novels.

Bell's whisky – blended whiskies (rather than single malt) were the most popular style in 1960: Bell's was one of the most popular, alongside Johnnie Walker, VAT69, Teacher's or Black & White.

Irish whiskey – Green Spot, Jameson's and Power's. These are “single pot still” whiskies, a mixture of single malt and unmalted barley distilled in a pot still. Although Irish whiskies were not as popular as Scottish, the E&C's clientele would have known these brands from back in Ireland.

Rum The E&C's Caribbean customers from the Caribbean may have sought a taste of home. Our bottles include Mount Gay Eclipse from Barbados; Lemon Hart, a blend of Jamaican rums made by the Navy's official supplier; and Lamb's Navy Rum, Britain's most popular brand.

Gordon's gin – this is an extremely popular London dry gin, unchanged since 1769.

Soft drinks

Coca-cola – Coke's popularity grew in WW2 because it was a favourite of American soldiers, and was boosted by the end of sugar rationing in 1952. By 1960 would have been available in most pubs.

Lemonade – Barr's, Schweppes and R White's were popular brands. 7-Up was another American soft drink, believed to have been first bottled in Britain by Mason's of Smethwick.

Vimto – several people have recalled being told to wait outside the E&C as children, with a pack of crisps and a Vimto.