Leicester City Locations

There are many locations in Leicester and Leicestershire which have been very significant in the history of Leicester Fosse and Leicester City.

Some of the buildings have long gone, some have changed and some are still with us.

Club Historian John Hutchinson's new series revisits each of these sites and tells the story behind them.

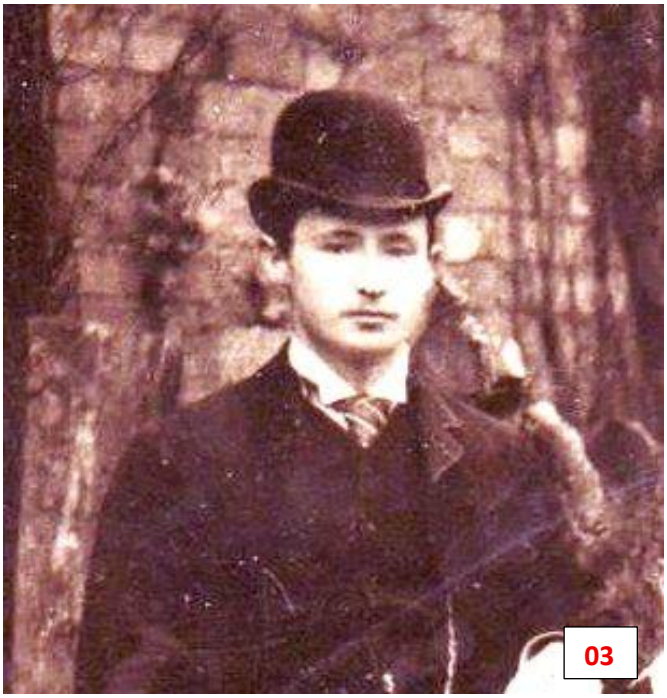
05. Frank Gardner's homes

Few people realise that the Chef and Spice Restaurant **(Picture 01)** on Hinckley Road stands on the site of what used to be the home of Frank Gardner **(Pictures 2a & 2b)** who was arguably the most important figure in the early years of Leicester Fosse.

Station
Bone Bridge Works
Elastic Fabric
Mel's Chap
Chapel
02a

Noble St
Flore St
Kate St
Glenfield Rd E
Kate St
King Richards Rd
A47
A5460
A47
Fitzroy St
Dane St
Fosse Road Central
Norfolk St
Andrewes St
Narborough Rd N
New Park St
W Hoone St
Hinckley Rd
A5460
02b

Frank **(Picture 03)** was a founder member of the Club who played in the first ever game. He was also the Club's Secretary for its first eight years. In this role he guided the Fosse from being a small club playing friendly games on Victoria Park to being a Club on the verge of joining the Football League.



As Club Secretary Frank was central to Leicester Fosse's search for a permanent home. The Fossils played on Victoria Park, the Belgrave Road Grounds, Mill Lane and the Grace Road Cricket Ground before finally settling on a 3¾ acre site near Filberts Street, which became the Club's home for 111 years.

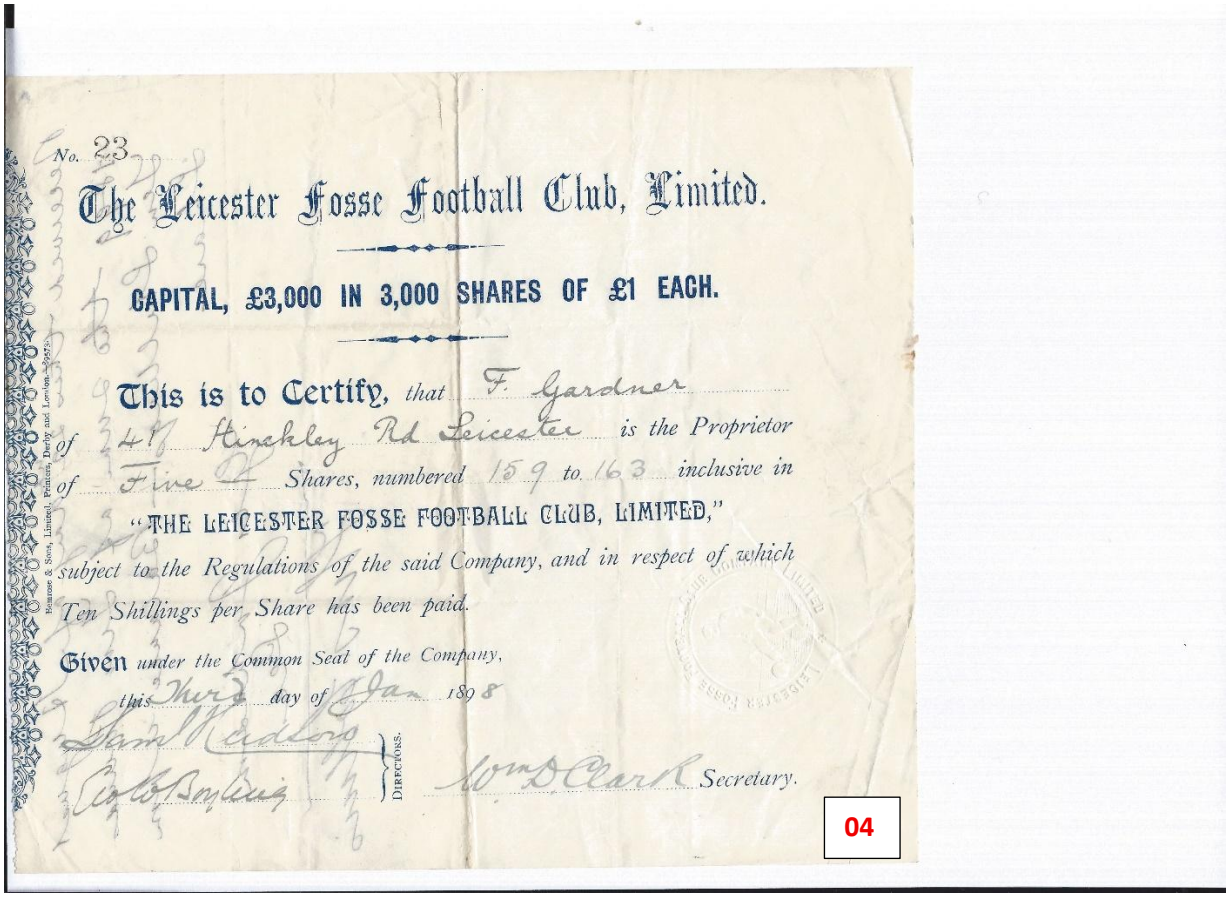
Whilst he was Secretary, members' numbers increased steadily, enabling three teams to be formed which involved much work in arranging fixtures. He was instrumental in the Club entering the new Leicestershire Challenge Cup in 1888/89 and in signing the Club's first ever professional, Harry Webb, from Stafford Rangers in 1888. He was a member of the side which won the Leicestershire Senior Cup in 1890.

Other Secretarial tasks included entering the FA Cup for the first time in 1890/91, arranging the first guaranteed match (for a £5 fee against Boston), bringing in better quality players and arranging a match against FA Cup Finalists Notts County, a game which drew the Club's biggest ever gate at Mill Lane attracting record receipts of £30.

He was re-elected Honorary Secretary in 1891/92, the Club's first season in the Midland League. By now the Club had twelve professionals.

The following season, Frank relinquished his post but his eight years as Secretary had been crucial. Without his input, it is doubtful if the Club would have been in a position to enter the Football League in 1894/95.

Whilst he was Leicester Fosse's secretary, he was also working as a manager at the Broughton Astley factory of Turner and Jarvis which manufactured lambswool and cashmere underwear.



No. 23

The Leicester Fosse Football Club, Limited.

CAPITAL, £3,000 IN 3,000 SHARES OF £1 EACH.

This is to Certify, that F. Gardner

of 41 Hinckley Rd Leicester is the Proprietor

of Five Shares, numbered 159 to 163 inclusive in

"THE LEICESTER FOSSE FOOTBALL CLUB, LIMITED,"

subject to the Regulations of the said Company, and in respect of which Ten Shillings per Share has been paid.

Given under the Common Seal of the Company,

this Thirty day of Jan 1898

Directors.

Wm D Clark Secretary.

04

By 1898, Frank was a shareholder in the Club **(Picture 04).**

In May 1899, Frank married Elizabeth Richardson who was the daughter of William Richardson, a partner in Harvey and Richardson's boot and shoe factory in Causeway Lane. They married in the Christians Meeting House in Crafton Street in Leicester. Frank served this Church for many years as a lay preacher, deacon, Sunday School teacher and choir member.

By now Frank and Elizabeth were living at 8 Mecklenberg Street **(Picture 05)** (renamed Severn Street in the First World War because of its German sounding name) where their four children were born between 1901 and 1908.

In 1906, Frank became partner in his father-in-law's boot and shoe factory.

Business prospered and by 1914, Frank's family had moved to 41 Knighton Drive **(Picture 06)** in Leicester. When the First World War broke out in August 1914, Frank joined the Leicestershire Citizens' Training League 'A' Company, of the Leicester Battalion.

08

Three years later, he became a 2nd Lieutenant and Commanding Officer of The Hotchkiss Gun Section of the Leicestershire Regiment's 1st Voluntary Battalion **(Picture 07).** Frank is in the centre of the front row.

By this time Frank's boot and shoe manufacturing business, now called Richardson and Gardner, had relocated to St Barnabas Road in Leicester.

Frank seems to have closed his factory, possibly in 1933, by which time he was President of the Leicestershire FA. **(Picture 08)**

Later that year he went to Dublin where he became Company Secretary for a wholesale boot and shoe manufacturer called B. Toone and Co (Ireland) Ltd.

When not working in Ireland, Frank lived in various digs in Leicester indicating that he and Elizabeth had separated. His home address was given as 46, Shirley Avenue, the home of his daughter Edith. (Edith's daughter Janet Firth provided us with much of the information for this article)

Frank died at the age of 77 on 8 December 1943 in the Central Nursing Home on University Road, Leicester.

His funeral was three days later at the Church of Christ **(Picture 09),** on the corner of Dashwood Road and Evington Road.

The grave of this founding father of Leicester Fosse can be found at Gilroes Cemetery.