Leicester City Locations

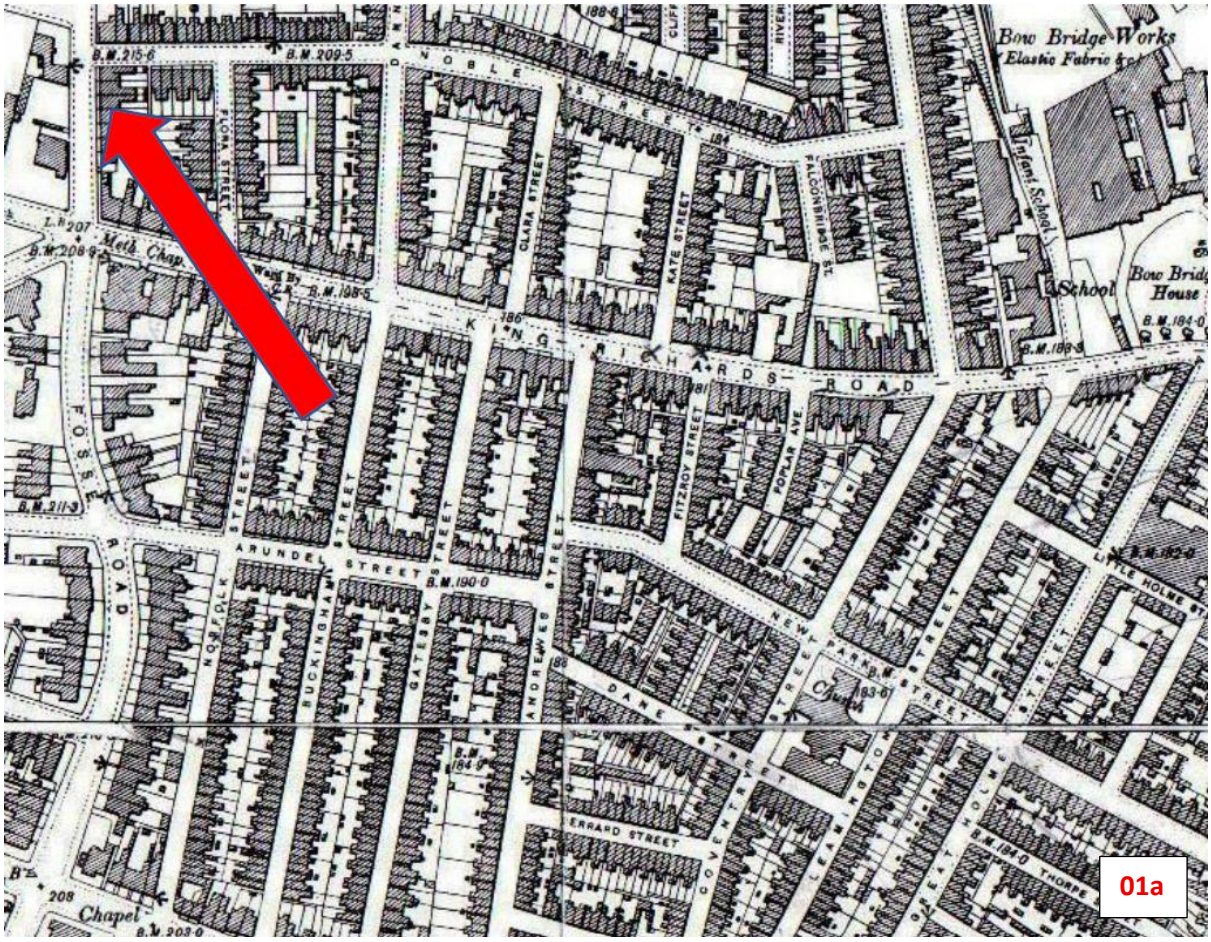
There are many locations in Leicester and Leicestershire which have been very significant in the history of Leicester Fosse and Leicester City.

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.

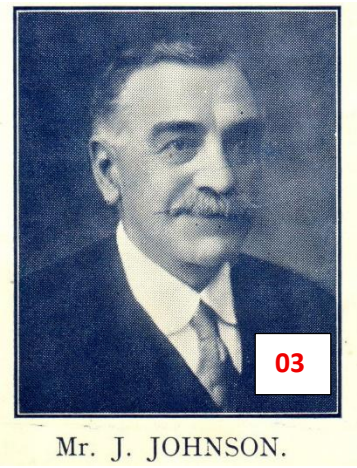
04. The Johnson Family's Home.

We have seen that the meeting which founded Leicester Fosse took place in a shed in the garden of a house belonging to the boot manufacturer William Ashby and that William's son, Arthur Douglas Ashby (known as ADA) was not only present at that meeting, but also played in Leicester Fosse's first ever game on 1 November 1884.



A few doors down from the Ashby family home **(Picture 01a & 01b)** there is a house on Fosse Road North **(Picture 02)** which was the home of the Johnson family. This family played a major role in the establishment and development of Leicester Fosse Football Club.

02



Joseph Johnson **(Picture 03)** owned a boot and shoe factory in Clyde Street, (near the present day St George's Retail Park) which specialised in women's and children's footwear. His contribution to Leicester Fosse's early years was enormous. He was described in the first ever history of Leicester Fosse, published in 1893, as 'a sincere and earnest supporter of the Fosse from its commencement' who served as the Club's president and treasurer until he resigned due to 'failing health' in 1892.

Praised for 'securing the success of the Club's engagements, season by season,' the news of Joseph's retirement was greeted with 'great regret by the Club's numerous supporters.'

The 1893 history booklet also records that 'Joseph provided funds for the Club's requirements.' An example of this was in 1891 when he located and rented a field near Filbert Street as the Fosse's future home, guaranteeing to pay the rent to the Corporation. This field was quickly developed into a football ground. The oldest existing plan of Filbert Street (then known as the Walnut Street ground) can be seen on this 1894/1895 Fosse season ticket**. (Picture 04)**

The 1893 history booklet also records that Joseph 'provided players from his own family, which for several seasons provided the backbone of the team'.

This was certainly true. Four of his sons played for Leicester Fosse. Three of them, William, Hilton and Edward played in the club's first game on 1 November 1884 and a fourth son, Joseph, also played regularly for the Fosse in the Club's early years.

All four brothers appear on this photograph of the Leicester Fosse team for the 1886/87 season **(Picture 05).** William and Hilton are on either side of the umpire who is wearing a bowler hat on the back row. Joseph Junior is on the left of the front row, and Edward is on the right.

For the first three seasons William, who also became a boot manufacturer, was the Club's captain. He also helped out with the secretarial duties in the 1888/89 season.

Hilton, who scored twice in the Club's first fixture, became an electrical engineer, eventually working for the Great North Railway as a senior engineer.

Joseph Junior became a printer and Edward, unlike his brothers, was still playing for the Club when it entered the Midland League in 1891.

That season, the Club's new ground at Filbert Street wasn't quite ready for the first three home fixtures. This forced the team to start the season playing at the Grace Road Cricket Ground, but on 28 November 1891, Edward played in the first ever Midland League game at Filbert Street, a fixture against Loughborough Town. He only missed one game all season, before retiring from football.

In addition to playing for the club, Edward also served for some years with his father Joseph on the Club's Committee

Joseph died in Hendon in 1910. Soon afterwards, his boot and shoe business, now run by Edward, moved from Clyde Street to Ash Street in West Humberstone.

Joseph's family grave is in Welford Road cemetery **(Picture 06).** In 2005 the cemetery established a series of memorial plaques commemorating the most prominent Leicester Citizens to be buried in the cemetery. Unfortunately, the inscription on the plaque dedicated to Joseph mistakenly confuses him with another prominent Leicester citizen, a draper, who was also called Joseph Johnson.

The inscription erroneously states that Joseph Johnson *'a draper, built a large store in the town centre. Established Leicester Fosse at Filbert Street.'*

He didn’t. Joseph Johnson the draper had no connection whatsoever with Leicester Fosse. His impressive purpose-built department store designed by the prominent Victorian architect Isaac Barradale stood on the corner of Market Street and Belvoir Street and became a Leicester institution for sixty years before it was taken over by Fenwick’s, and which is now being developed into the Gresham Hotel.