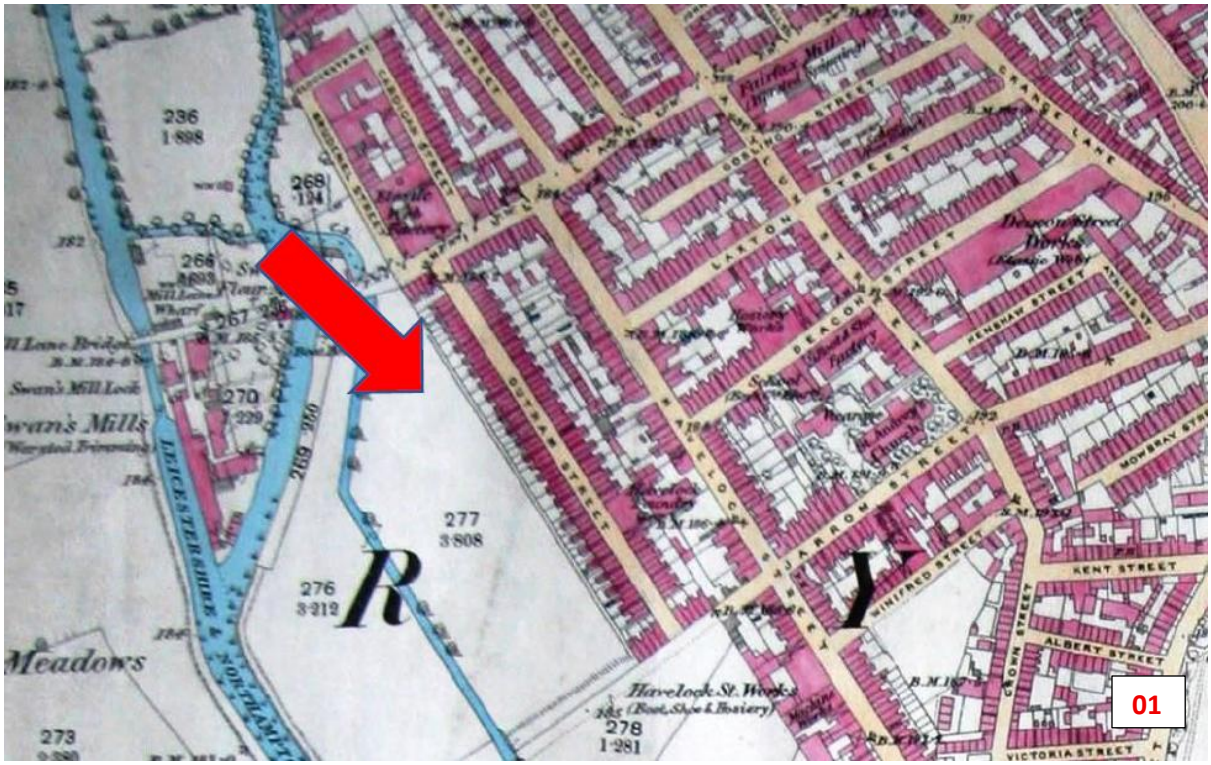
Leicester City Locations

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.

09. The Mill Lane Ground



Having spent their first five seasons playing their home matches either at Victoria Park or at the Belgrave Road Grounds, Leicester Fosse spent the next two seasons (1889/90 and 1890/91) playing their home matches at the Mill Lane Ground **(Picture 01)**, which they rented off the Corporation.

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The ground was approached from Mill Lane, a street of long demolished terraced houses **(Picture 02)**. It is now pedestrianised and runs through the centre of De Montfort University's campus**. (Picture 03)**

To bring the ground up to an acceptable standard, the site had to be enclosed so that fans could be charged an entrance fee. The poor playing surface also needed improving.

The first match at the new ground was on 5 October 1889 against Mill Hill House. To mark the occasion Alderman Thomas Wright should have ceremonially kicked-off, but he arrived late and had to conduct the ceremony after half time!

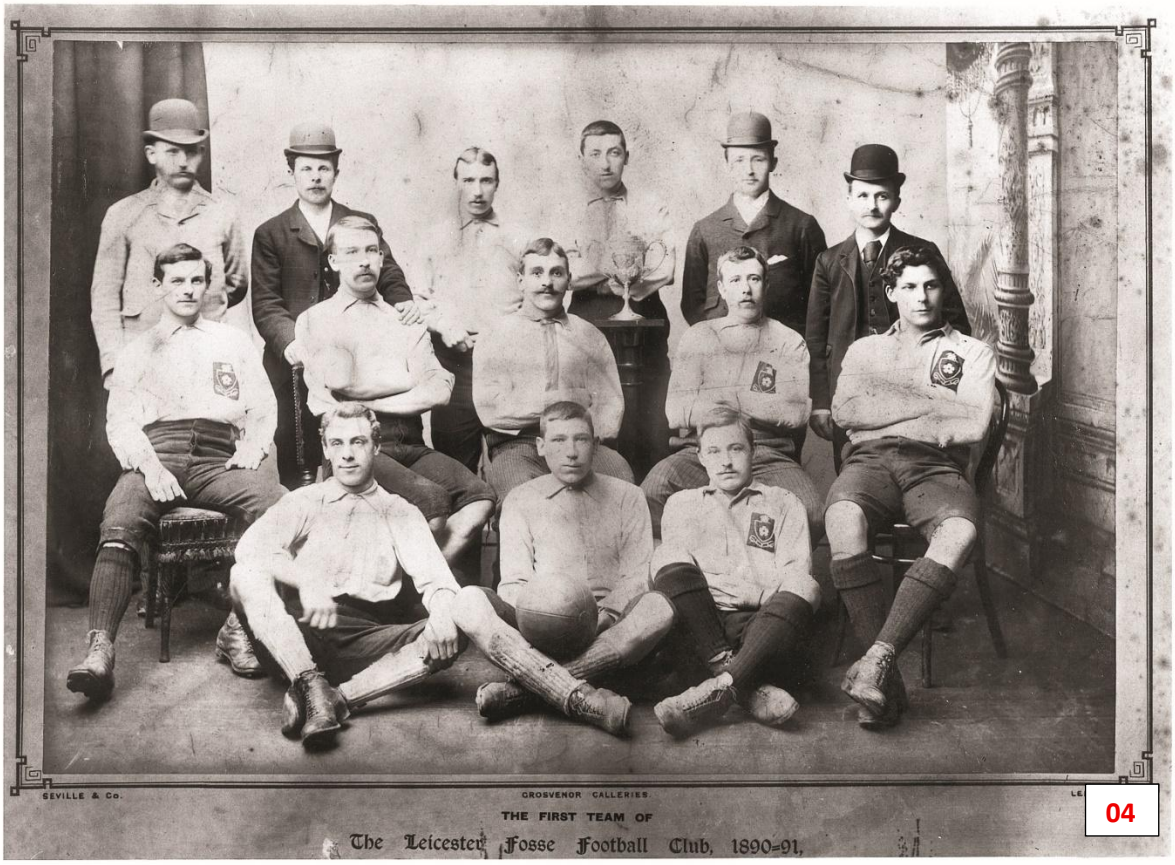
Playing in their chocolate brown and blue shirts, the Fosse won this first game 3-1. The crowd was small. Gate receipts were £3.50.

The poor state of the pitch continued to be an issue. In November, the Shepshed captain complained that there were ridges down each side of the field of play. Leicester Fosse won the match 6-1

A month later, in a Leicestershire Senior Cup match against Leicester Teachers, Fosse's opponents complained that the pitch, 'was quite unfit for a cup tie.' In addition to the ridges, the pitch was frozen and a thick fog descended on the ground in the second half. The Fossils won 2-0 and went on to win the trophy later that season, the first time the Club had won any silverware.

Meanwhile attendances at Mill Lane were increasing. A record crowd turned up on 10 January 1890 but unfortunately the opponents Long Eaton failed to arrive.

The first season at Mill Lane was very encouraging for the Fossils. Gate receipts for the season were £85. The balance sheet showed a loss of £6, but a great deal of money had been spent on improving the ground's facilities.



Fosse's second season at Mill Lane saw four innovations. On a national level, penalties and goal nets were introduced. Locally, the Fosse started wearing their new strip, a white shirt with black shorts **(Picture 04)** and they also entered the FA Cup for the first time.

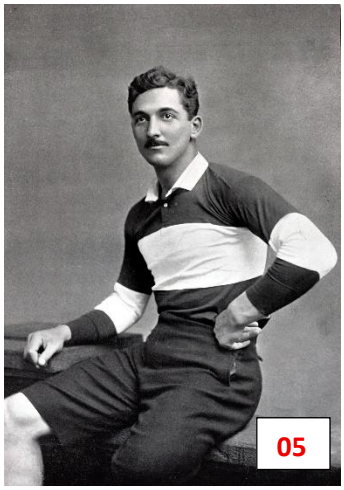
2,000 spectators watched the season's first match at Mill Lane, a 5-3 victory over Coventry Singers.

On 4 October 1890, the ground staged the Fosse's first ever FA cup tie, a 1st round qualifying match against Burton Wanderers. Fosse were confident but lost 4-0, in front of a big crowd.

A month later Aston Villa's Reserves, including several first team players, defeated the Fosse at Mill Lane.

On 13 December a gate of 2,500, generating gate receipts of £23/3/0 (£23.25p), watched a strange 1-1 draw against local rivals Loughborough. Ground conditions were good but in the second half the fog was so thick that the teams groped their way off the pitch. Unfortunately, the Fosse goalkeeper Charlie Walker, due the fog, hadn't realised that the game had been abandoned. He stayed in his goal until his teammates came looking for him!

There were no more games at Mill Lane until after Christmas because the winter was so harsh. The canal, which ran close to the ground, froze solid between West Bridge and Aylestone.

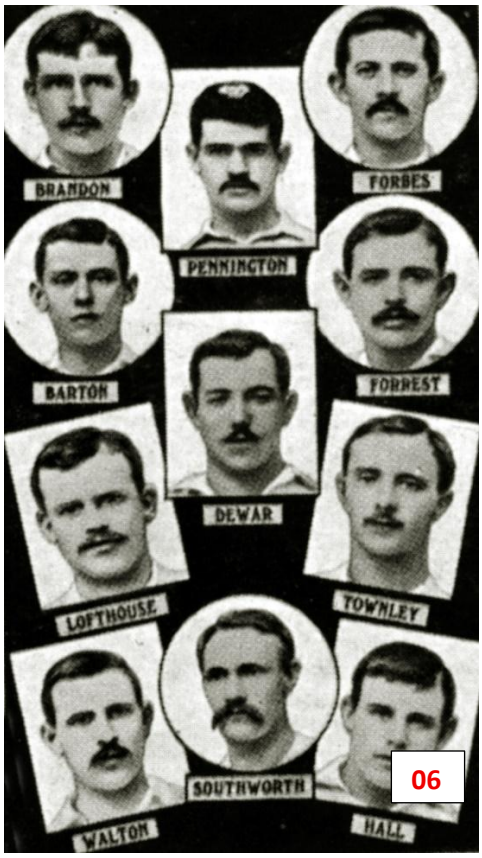


When a game against the renowned amateur side, London Casuals, did take place on 27 December 1890, the morning was spent clearing snow off the pitch and there was another heavy snowfall just before kick off. Despite the presence of Victorian superstar C.B.Fry **(Picture 05)** in their side, the Casuals were defeated 1-0.

The final game of the season at Mill Lane drew the biggest crowd ever to watch a soccer match in Leicester. The opponents were FA Cup Finalists Notts County **(Picture 06)**, who also finished 3rd in the League that season. Gate receipts were £30. The final score was 2-2.

At the end of the season, Leicester Fosse successfully applied for membership of the recently established Midland League. However, the club then suffered a huge blow. Leicester Corporation decided to build the present day Ullswater Street **(Picture 07)** and Rydal Street on the Mill Lane ground **(Picture 08)**

Once again, Leicester Fosse were without a home.



York Rd
Norton St
Marlborough St
Oxford St
Lower Brown St
Welford Rd
Marquis St
Duke St
King St
Carlton St
Richmond St
Newarke Close
Gateway St
Mill Ln
Gosling St
Grange Ln
De Montfort University
Western Blvd
Deacon St
Atkins St
Pelham St
Upper King St
Turner St
Tower St
Newtown St
Infirmary Rd
A594
Havelock St
Grasmere St
Jarrom St
Winifred St
Infirmary Close
Eastern Blvd
Ullswater St
Rydal St
Clarendon St
Baysdale Rd
Leicester Royal Infirmary
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