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.

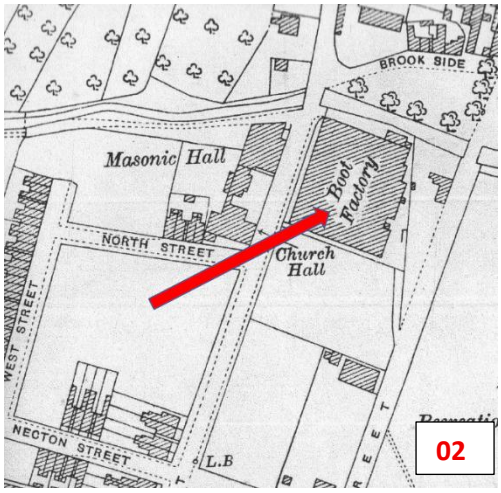
The Montague Rice and Son factory in Syston

Montague John Rice **(left, Picture 01)** dominated the formative years of Leicester City after the Club was restructured from the old Leicester Fosse in 1919.

A member of the old Leicester Fosse Board, he was a key figure in setting up Leicester City Football Club. He was Club president from 1919 -1925 and, following the unexpected death of the first Leicester City Chairman, the boot and shoe manufacturer William Jennings in 1921, he then became the Club's chairman until 1925. He was also a Director of the Club between 1929 and 1931.

In addition his son Arthur **(centre, Picture 01)** was also a very influential figure at the Club. He too had been on the old Leicester Fosse Board and was a Leicester City Board member from 1921 until 1940.

The Rice family were wealthy wholesale boot manufacturers. Montague had started his business in Leicester in the 1890s, before moving to a more commodious factory in Broad Street Syston (**Picture 02)** in the early 20th century. The site of the long demolished factory is now a waste ground opposite Syston's Masonic Hall. **(Picture 03)**



Arthur became a partner in 1901 and joint Managing Director in 1915, when the business converted to a private limited company known as Montague Rice and Son Ltd. Selling football boots around the world, the company won many industry awards.

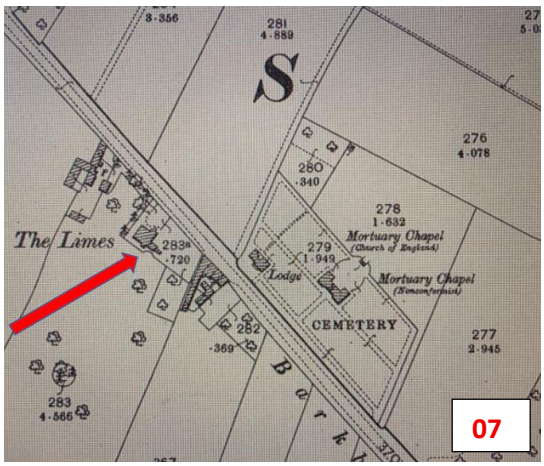
Montague died on 7 July 1933. A major figure in the Club's history from Leicester Fosse times, he had seen the Club rise from having to seek re-election to the Football League in 1915 (due to finishing bottom but one in the two division league), to the heights of finishing runners-up in the old First Division in 1929 with a team containing three England international players **(Picture 04).** He had also been involved in the ground developments at Filbert Street which had seen a new Main Stand built and by the time he left the Board in 1931, the Double Decker had also been built.

His obituaries mentioned that he had a son (Arthur) and three daughters, one of whom had tragically died in a suicide pact two years earlier in Belgium.

As well as his Syston business, he was also Chairman of R. Rudlen & Co Ltd, a major shoe manufacturing business in Wellingborough. He left an estate worth £5,395, the equivalent of nearly half a million pounds today.

A year after his death, his family donated a trophy **(Picture 05)** to Leicestershire Schools FA. Its official name was 'The Montague John Rice Trophy for the Junior School Championship of Leicestershire.' It soon became known as the Rice Bowl. It is still competed for today, with the Finals now being held at King Power Stadium. Leicester City star players Graham Cross (in 1953) and Harvey Barnes (in 2009) **(**holding the shield, **Picture 06)** both won this trophy whilst playing for their respective junior schools.

Arthur continued to run the business after Montague's death. For many years both he and his father were well known for their charity work at Christmas for senior citizens and for children.

He was a life governor of the Leicester Royal Infirmary and was also an enthusiastic life member of Leicestershire County Cricket Club. He had been known to travel by air to matches so as not to miss the pre-lunch session. As a Board member at Leicester City , he had been chair of the Grounds Committee but in 1940, along with eight other directors, he was temporarily suspended whilst the Club's finances were being investigated by the FA. He was reinstated just before Christmas in 1940, but died shortly afterwards on 9 January 1941.

He was buried at Syston cemetery, which was almost directly opposite the Rice family home. This was an impressive building called The Limes which was set in large grounds on Barkby Road **(Picture 07)** in Syston. Today, a modern housing development on Lime Close stands on the site**. (Picture 08).**