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.

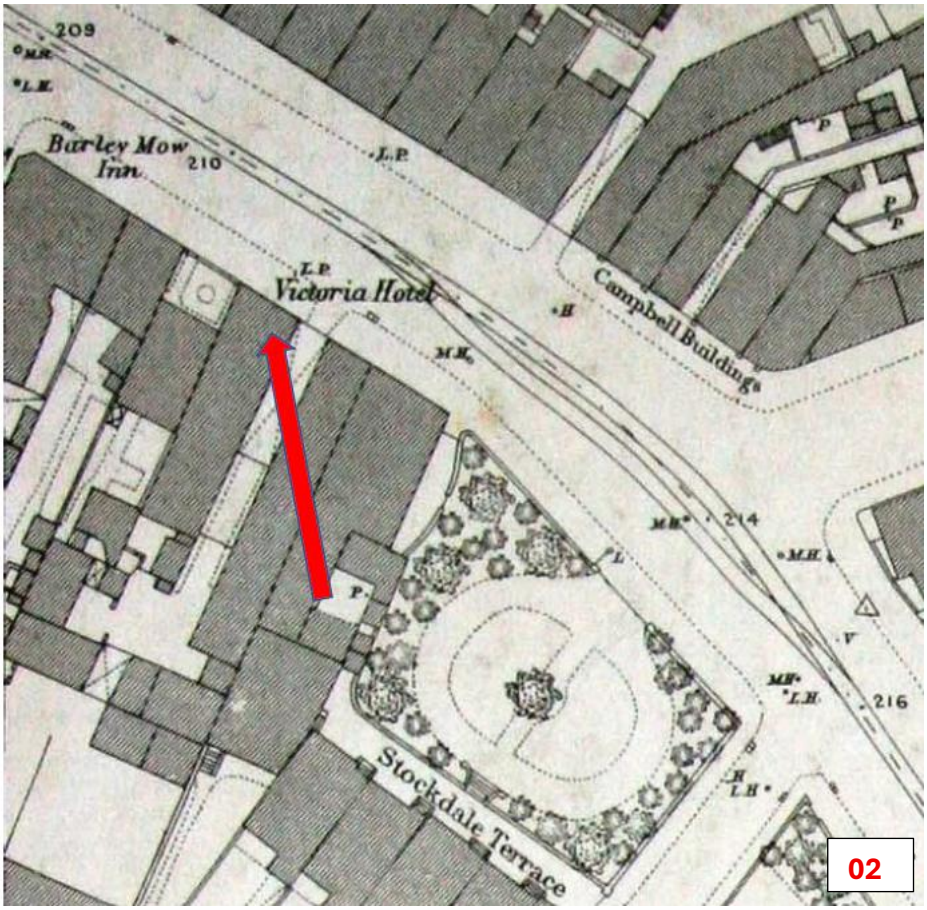
Some of the buildings have long gone, some have changed and some are still with us.

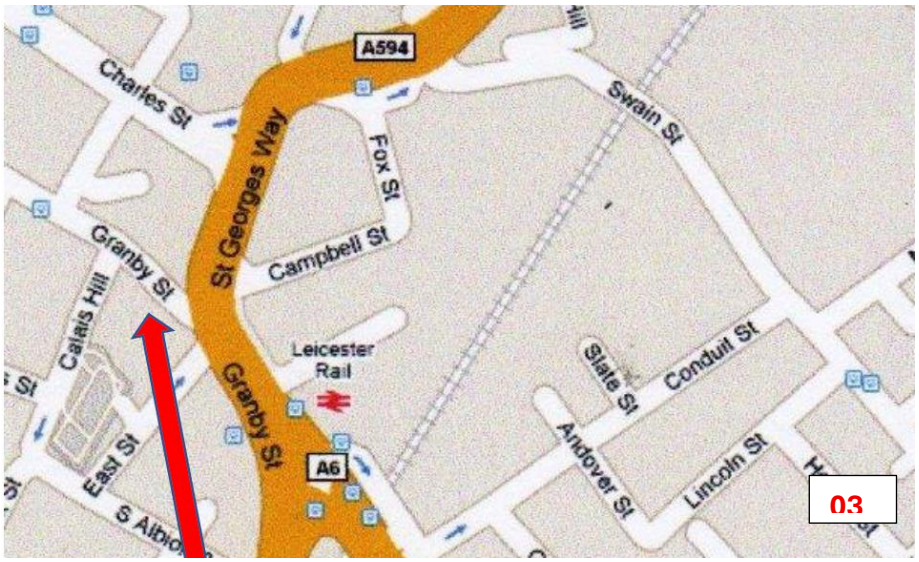
Club Historian John Hutchinson's new series revisits each of these sites and tells the story behind them.

11. The Victoria Hotel

Few people realise that 130 years ago, the building which is now a convenience store on Granby Street **(Picture 01)** was where the Committee of Leicester Fosse made a series of key decisions which were crucial in enabling the Club not only to survive but also to develop.

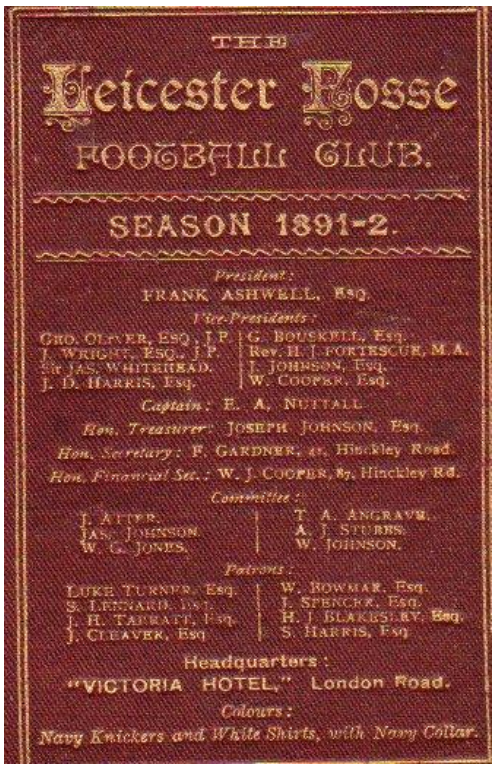
This was because in 1891 Leicester Fosse moved their headquarters from the East Gate Coffee House to this building which in those days was the Victoria Hotel.





Built by 1870, the Victoria Hotel was one of several hotels in the area **(Pictures 02 & 03)** catering for the increase in railway passengers after the opening of the Campbell Street Railway Station in 1840. When Leicester Fosse moved their Headquarters to the Victoria Hotel, the Campbell Street Station was in the process of being replaced by the present day London Road station.

This watercolour by Victorian artist John Fulleylove shows the Victoria Hotel in the 1890s (**Picture 04**). The red brick antique shop in the left foreground was replaced by the YMCA building in 1901.The Barley Mow public House is two doors down near to the travel pioneer Thomas Cook's Temperance Hall, the large building in the centre of the Picture which was demolished in 1961.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SEASON 1891-2.
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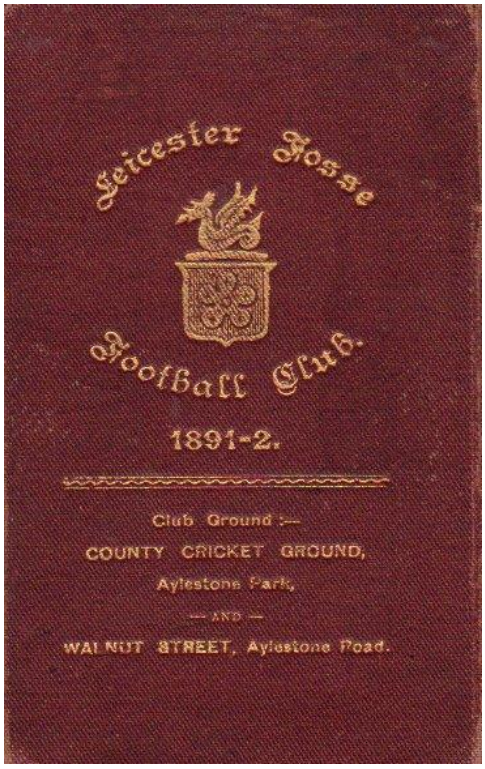
Colours:
Navy Knickers and White Shirts, with Navy Collar.

05



06

Leicester Fosse used the Hotel as their headquarters for the 1891/92 season. The first set of decisions taken by the Committee in the Victoria Hotel related to the problem of finding a new ground. At the end of the previous season, the club had to leave their Mill Lane Ground as the site was required for building houses. Seeing their plight, Leicestershire County Cricket Club invited the Fosse to play at their Grace Road ground, (then known as Aylestone Park) at the start of the season. This ground however was too far out of the town, transport links were poor and crowds were small. Negotiations were therefore opened with the Leicester Corporation to rent a 3 ¾ acre site near Filbert Street, which was to become the Club's home for the next 111 years, after it had moved there in November 1891. These venues appear are listed on the front cover of the 1891/92 season ticket **(Picture 06)**

The second major issue facing the Fosse Committee in their meetings at the Victoria Hotel related to the challenges faced by the Club as new members of the recently formed Midland League.

Great efforts were made to secure better players. This resulted in twelve professionals being engaged that season. In addition three new committee members were co-opted to assist with the increasingly arduous workload, Ernest Nuttall was appointed captain and the decision was taken to continue to run three teams. It was also decided to introduce a new kit of 'navy knickers and white shirts with a navy collar 'to reflect the team's change in status.' **(Picture 07)**

The Club's financial situation also exercised the minds of the Fosse Committee in their deliberations at the Victoria Hotel.

Money was needed to develop Filbert Street and to purchase better players. To this end they backed a move by supporters of the Club to raise money. A public meeting was held at the Cooperative Hall in March 1892, a fund-raising committee was elected and it raised £200.

The Committee also endorsed the setting up of the Club's first Annual Sports Day on their old Belgrave Road ground. This event raised another £65.

At the end of the 1891/92 season, the Fossils finished equal bottom of the Midland League, alongside Derby Junction. The low point of the season was an 11-1 defeat at the hands of the Champions, Rotherham Town.

At the end of the 1891/92 season, one of the final decisions made by the Committee at Victoria Hotel was to move the Fosse' headquarters from the Hotel to the Freemen's Arms Hotel on Aylestone Road.

One reason for this was that it was much nearer to the new ground at Filbert Street.

Also, it may or may not be significant, but James Cleaver who continued to own the Victoria Hotel throughout the 1890s, ceased to be listed as a patron of the Club on the 1893/94 season ticket.