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.

06. The homes of the founder players

Leicester Fosse played their first ever game on 1 November 1884.

The venue was a private field on what is now Fosse Road South. It was about half a mile away from the Fosse Road location of the shed where the club was founded and which was situated in the garden of the Ashby family home.

Alongside this field ran the Midland Railway Company's Leicester to Burton Railway line.

The site is now covered by a residential cul-de-sac called Westleigh Avenue **(Picture 1)**

In this inaugural fixture Leicester Fosse defeated Syston Fosse 5-0.

The local press listed the Fosse team, in its 1-3-6 formation, as follows:

E. Smith (goal): F. Burdett (three-quarter-back): E. Johnson, W. Johnson, F. Gardner (half-backs):

Forwards: H. Johnson, B. Lewitt (right wing): A. West, F Bromwich (centre): A. Ashby, S. Dingley (left wing);

This team formation reflected the fact that in those days, great emphasis was placed on the dribbling skills of individuals.

Influenced by rugby union, the first football teams of the 19th century tended to play a 1-1-8 system with one three-quarter-back, one half-back and eight forwards, with players charging down the opposition.

However the style of football which was developing in Scotland was beginning to place more emphasis on passing rather than on dribbling and systems adapted to a 2-2 -5 system, or, in Leicester Fosse's case for their game against Syston Fosse, to a 1-3-6 formation.

In this first game, the first half was pretty even with West scoring before half time. He scored again in the second half, Dingley added a third and Hilton Johnson scored two more.

A remarkable feature of this first Fosse team was that all the players lived within a quarter of a mile of each other clustered around what is now Fosse Road North. The map **(Picture 02)** locates the sites of each of the homes where the Fosse players who appeared in that first match lived.

We have already seen in this series that the home of Ashby was very close to the Johnson brothers' house **(Picture 03)** close to the junction with Glenfield Road and that Gardner lived nearby on Hinckley Road.

The right winger Dingley and goalkeeper Smith lived on Norfolk Street which runs parallel to the east of Fosse Road. Their houses have since been demolished.

Their houses were very close to another team member's house on Fosse Road. This was where West lived **(Picture 04).** His father was another boot manufacturer, like the fathers of those other Fosse Road residents, the Johnson boys and Arthur Ashby.

Burdett, the three-quarter-back, lived on Noble Street just round the corner from the Johnson brothers. His house, like those of the Norfolk Street residents Dingley and Smith have long been demolished, but research in the directories from the 1880s together with the OS maps from that decade have made it possible for us to pinpoint the exact site of their houses.

The final two players of the team were the centre Bromwich and the right winger Lewitt. They both lived on King Richards Road. Lewitt's house on the south side of the road was demolished when the road was widened. Bromwich's home was on the other side of the road still stands and has been converted into a shop. **(Picture 05** 2nd from left**)**

Appropriately, and by a quirk of fate, Bromwich's house stands within five yards of Kate Street which was adorned by the impressive mural depicting the portraits of the Leicester City team which won the Premier League in 2016, and which has now sadly been largely painted over, apart from the images of Jamie Vardy and Andy King **(Picture 06).**

It is quite remarkable that this iconic and historic mural was located so close to the home of one of the founders of the club 132 years earlier.