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.

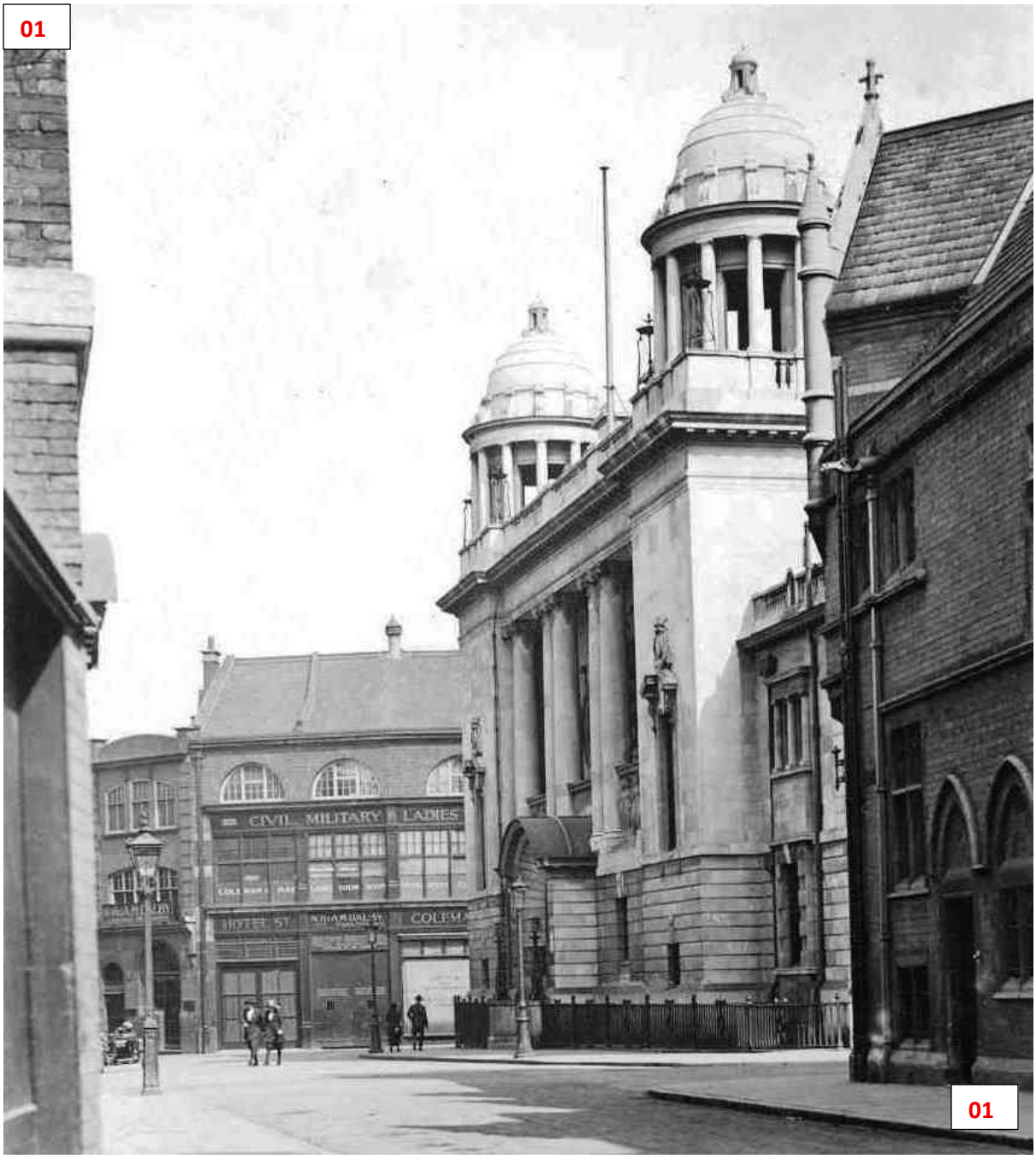
Some of the buildings have long gone, some have changed and some are still with us.

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

15. 5½ St Martins, 48 Silver Arcade and Stanley Chambers

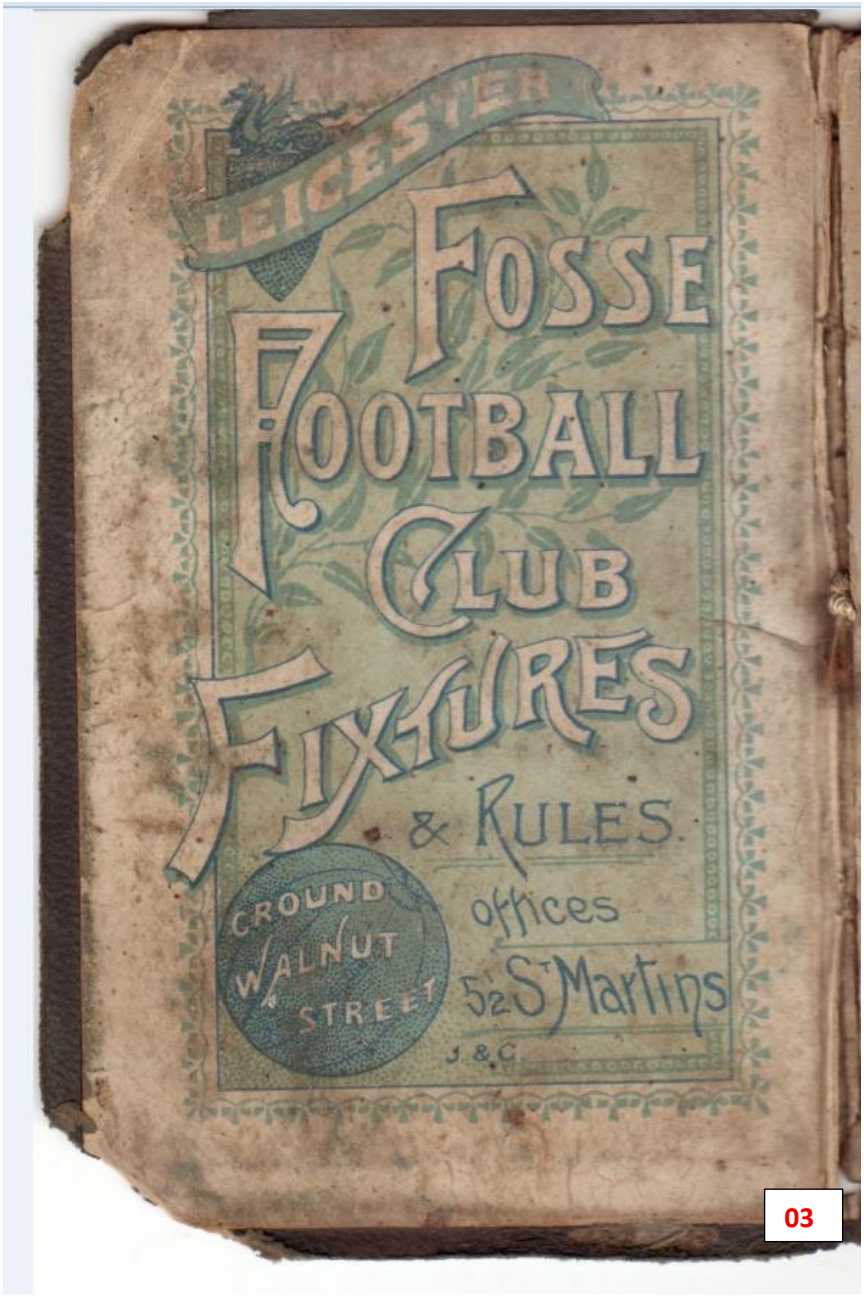
Although Leicester Fosse moved to Filbert Street in 1894, it was another twenty years before the Club moved its headquarters to the ground and even then it was initially only a temporary move.

01



01

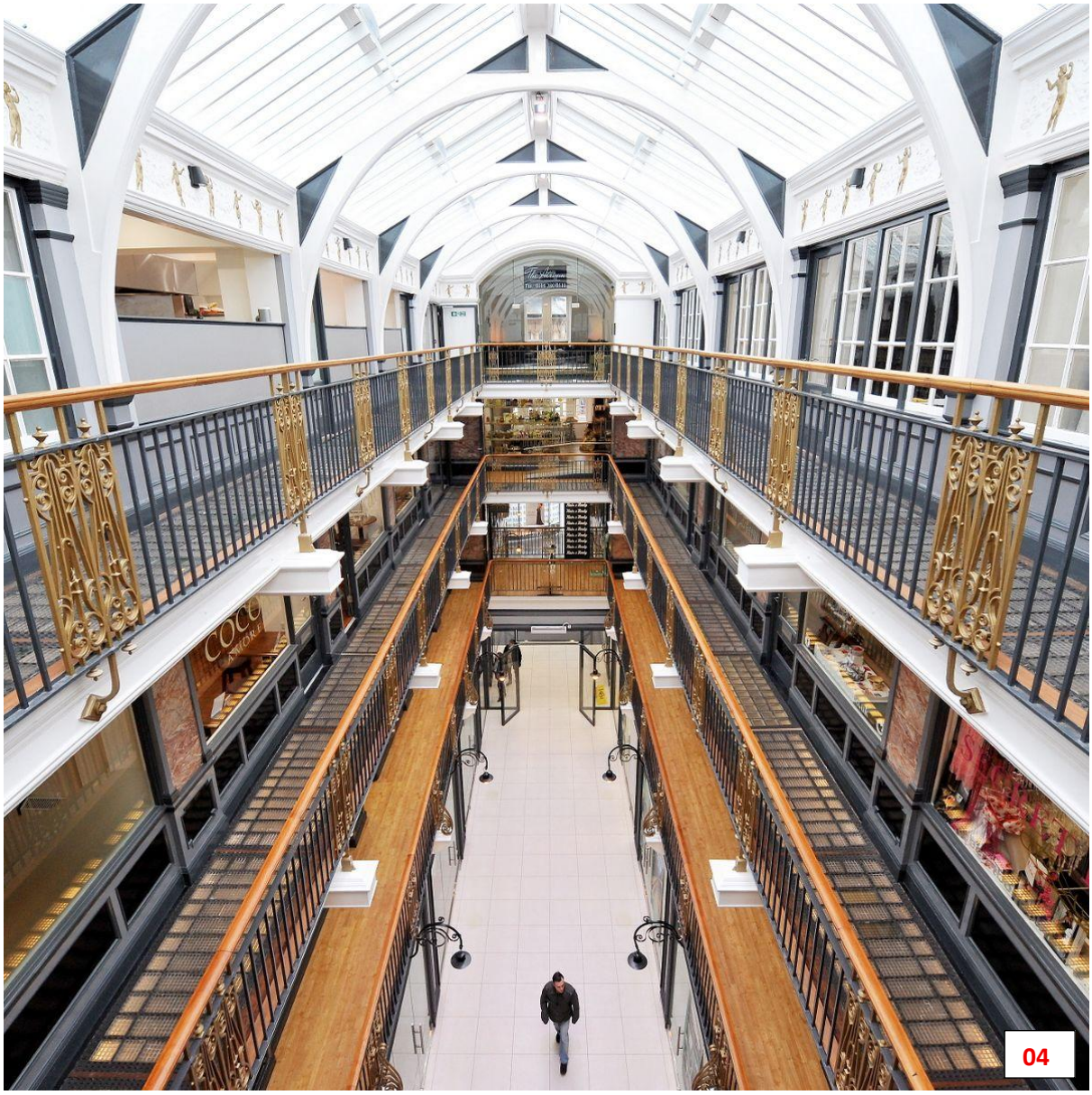
In 1894, to coincide with their elevation to the Football League, Leicester Fosse moved its headquarters from the Freemen's Hotel on Aylestone Road to a much more suitable office in St. Martins **(Picture 01).** Now long demolished, this building stood near the entrance to the present day St Martins Square. **(Picture 02)**



This address of the office was 5½ St Martins. It appears on the 1894/95 season ticket which is in the Club's archive. **(Picture 03)**

A study of an 1894 street directory indicates that Leicester Fosse took this office over from a heraldic engraver and that they shared the building with a cigar manufacturer, a yarn manufacturer's agent, a tailor and an optician.

During Leicester Fosse's years at St Martins, the Club overcame an existential threat to its existence in 1897 by attracting new investment and by becoming a limited company. It also consolidated its position in the Second Division of the Football league, coming very close to promotion in 1899.


04

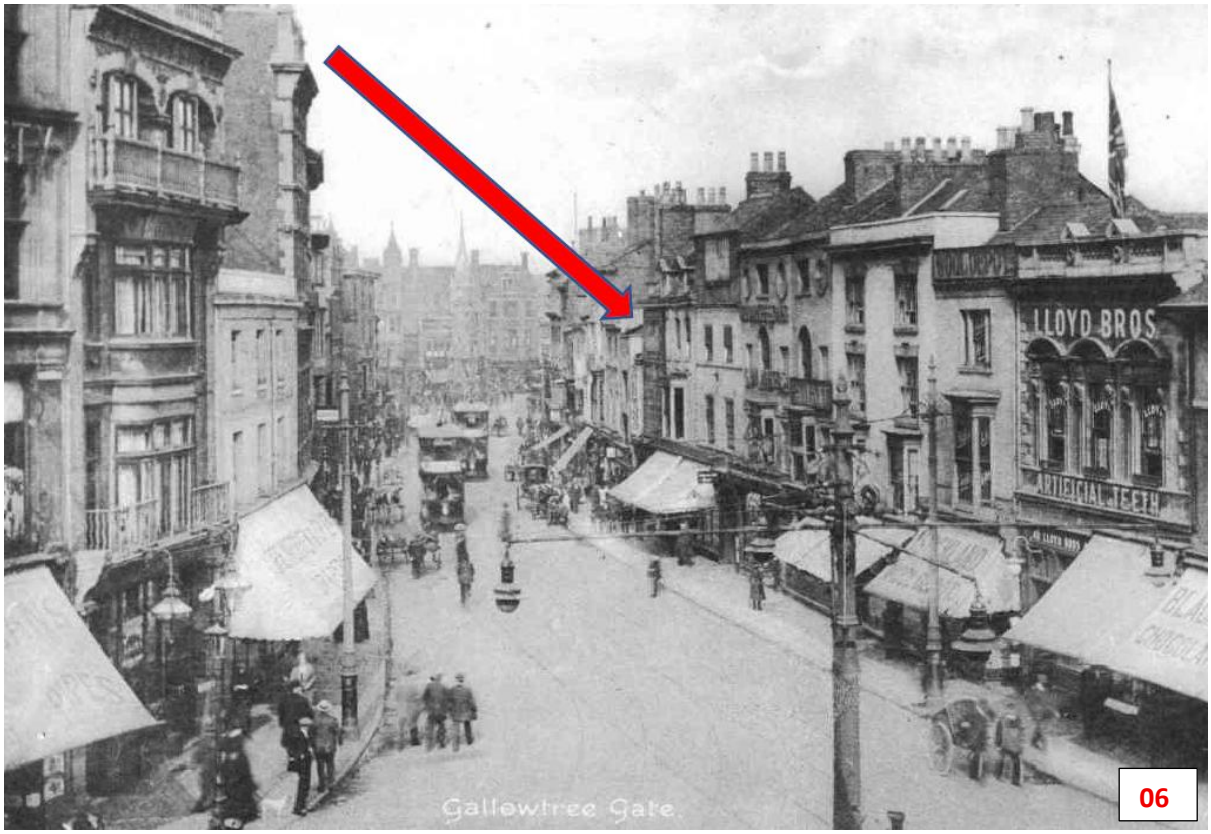
In 1904, the year that Leicester Fosse finished bottom of the two-division Football League, the Club moved to a prestigious office on the third level gallery **(Picture 04)** at the nearby fashionable Silver Arcade **(Picture 05)** which, with its four storeys, is the highest Victorian Arcade in Britain.

This impressive arcade, which is close to the Clock Tower, had been designed fifteen years earlier by Amos Hall who was also responsible for the distinctive corner of Leicester's Grand Hotel.

Fosse's office address was 48 Silver Arcade. Leicester Tigers also had their office in the arcade, listed under the name of Thomas Crumbie, who had a stand named after him at the Welford Road ground. Other neighbours of Fosse in the Arcade included a hairdresser, a billiard hall, a bookseller and a model building society.

In Leicester City's archive collection, we have some of the Directors' handwritten minutes from their meetings at 48 Silver Arcade, which served as their headquarters until 1911.

Providing a fascinating insight into football in the Edwardian era, these indicate that issues discussed at Silver Arcade included players' wages (between £2 and £4 per week), players contracts (some of which we have in the archive collection), bank overdraft arrangements, player transfers, seat prices, the Players' Union, illegal payments, expenses, preparing for life in the First Division , ground improvements, appointing an assistant trainer who was a total abstainer from alcohol, advertisements at Filbert Street and the installation of a telephone box at the ground for the press. The also discussed preparing for the Commission appointed by the Football League to investigate Leicester Fosse's 12-0 defeat by Nottingham Forest in April 1909.



In 1911, faced with ever increasing financial difficulties, the Directors decided, as a cost cutting measure, to move the Club headquarters from Silver Arcade to Stanley Chambers at 30 Gallowtree Gate **(Picture 06)** on a three year tenancy. Modern shops now stand on the site. **(Picture 07)**

The Directors' minutes indicate that the rent was £15 for the first year, rising to £17.50 and to £20 in the second and third years. The Fosse's co- tenants at Stanley Chambers included an artificial teeth manufacturer, a postcard publisher, a printer and a tailor.

At Stanley Chambers, the Board's priority was to address the Club's colossal overdraft. This had reached £7,700 by 1913, which is the equivalent today of £900,000.

The Directors' solution was to establish a three year policy of selling the best players and recruiting only non league players, inexperienced players or old timers who had seen better days. The intention was to avoid the bottom two places in the two-division Football League. Failure to do so would mean that the Club would have to seek re-election to remain in the Football League.

This policy resulted in poor quality players, far too many unsettled teams, the resignation of three secretary/managers in three years and a steady drift towards the foot of the Football League, culminating in the team **(Picture 08)** finishing in the bottom two in the League in 1915, forcing the Club to seek re-election along with Glossop.