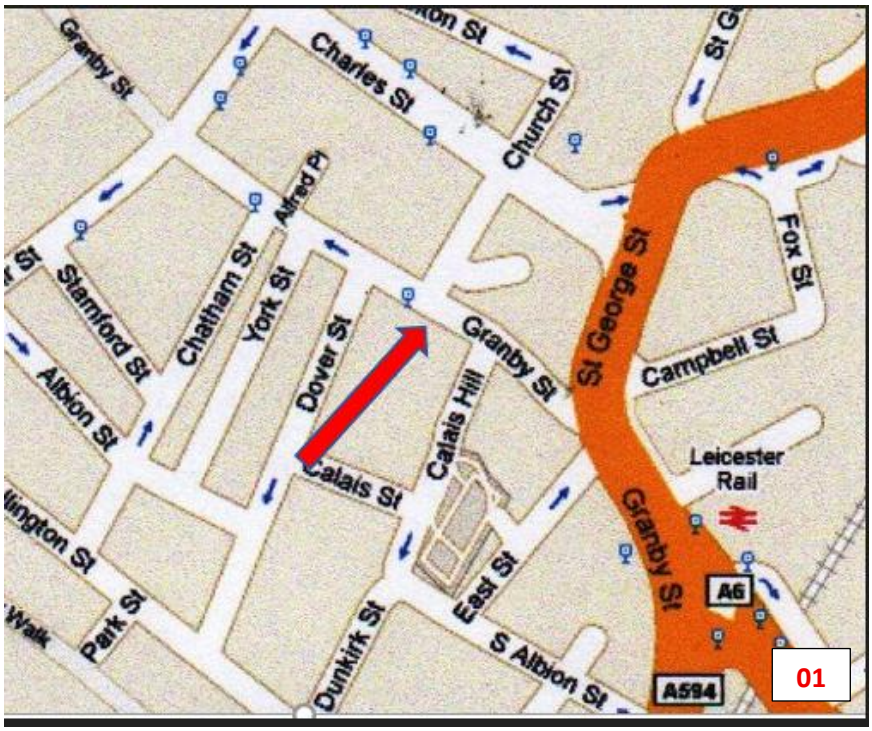
Leicester City Locations

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.

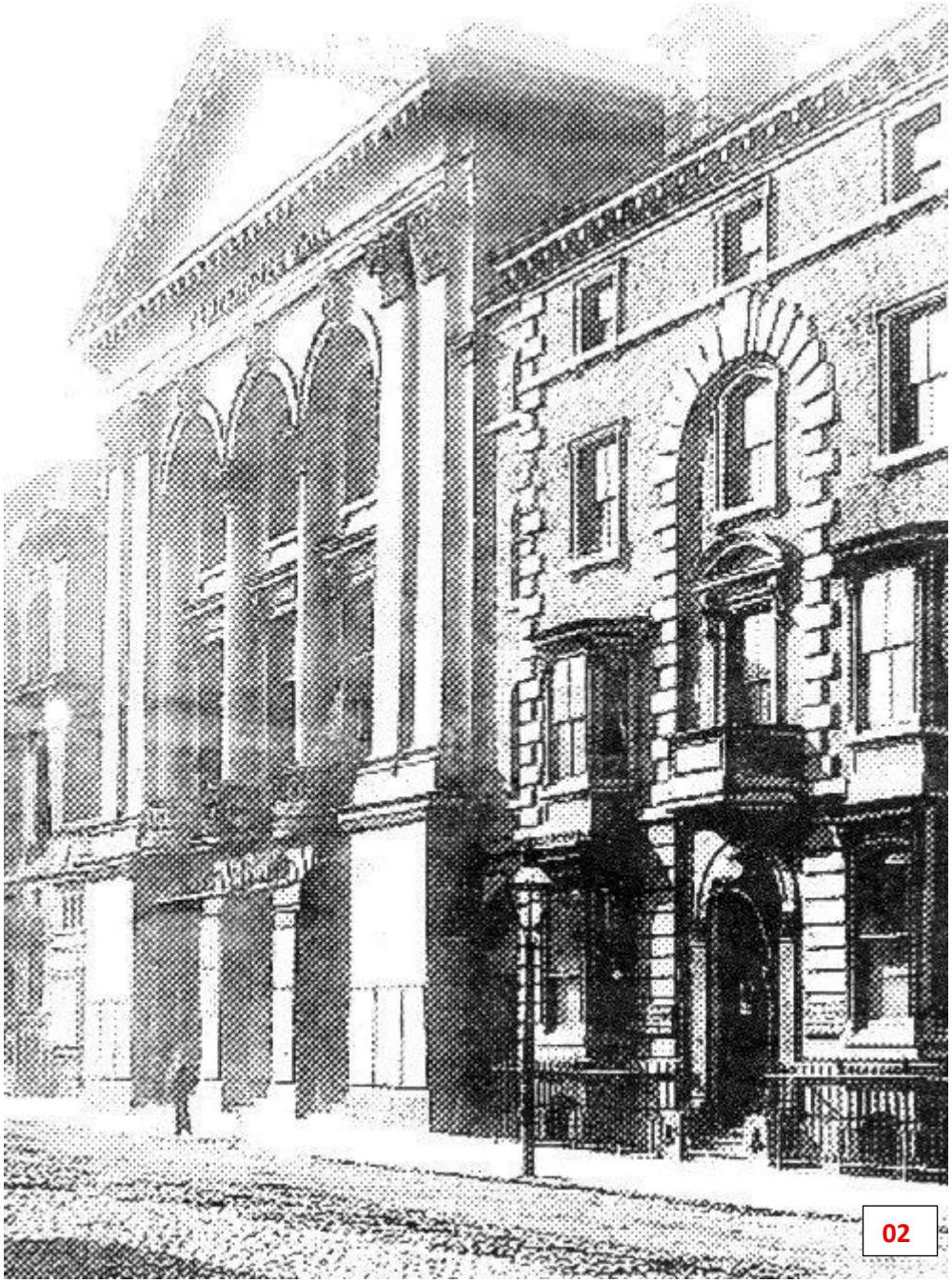
14. The Temperance Hall



The Temperance Hall in Granby Street **(Picture 01)** twice played a significant role in the history of Leicester Fosse.

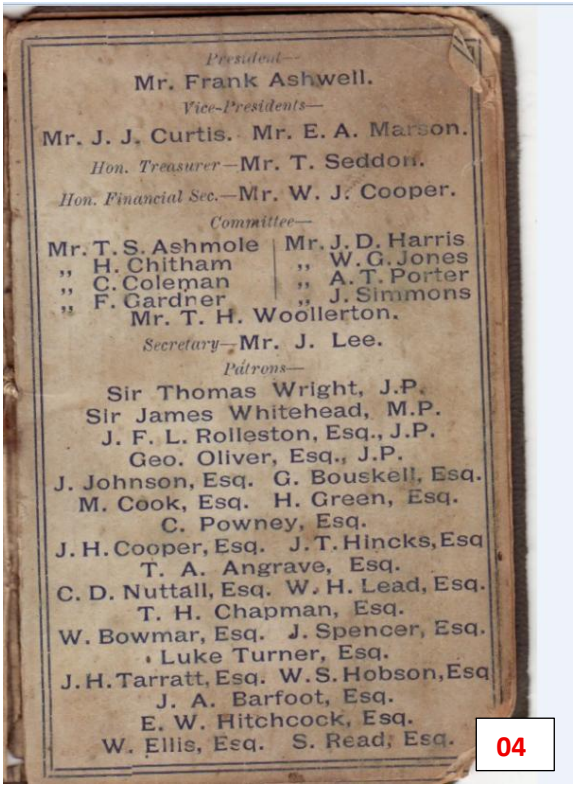
In 1897, after only three years as a Football League Club, Leicester Fosse was on the verge of financial collapse and extinction. To address this issue an AGM was held at the Temperance Hall.

Eleven years later, in 1908, the Fossils faced another financial crisis, resulting in another meeting at the Temperance Hall which also decided the Club's future course.



The Temperance Hall was a Victorian concert hall built in 1853 at a cost of £10,000 at the behest of the travel pioneer and leading temperance supporter, Thomas Cook who also built his Temperance Hotel alongside it **(Picture 02).** When built, the hall was Leicester's tallest building. It had impressive Corinthian columns supporting a pediment. It was the first building in Leicester to receive its water supply from the newly constructed Thornton Reservoir. Inside, a large hall with galleries, an impressive organ and orchestra space, could hold 1,700 people. There was also a lecture room which could accommodate 350 people, a library containing 7,000 books, a committee room and two other large rooms. It was also the headquarters of Leicester's Temperance Society.

03



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04

On 26 May 1897, Leicester Fosse's AGM was held at the Temperance Hall, probably in the lecture room. The Club was in crisis, drifting rapidly towards bankruptcy, having suffered with a formidable overdraft for too long. Players' wages had increased by £400, gate receipts and subscriptions had dropped by £500 and the overdraft had risen from £457 to £500. At the meeting, the failures of the Committee running the club were highlighted and following a proposal from the floor, the club became a limited company, known as 'Leicester Fosse Football Club Limited', with a share capital of £3,000. The old committee was replaced by the club's first ever Board of Directors and a new President, Sir John Rolleston **(Picture 03)** was appointed. His name appears on the Fosse season ticket for 1894/95 which we have in the Club's archives **(Picture 04).** Three years after the meeting, he was elected as an MP for Leicester. A new Secretary-manager, William Clark, was also appointed, although he was soon to be suspended for contravening various FA rules.

This Temperance Hall meeting undoubtedly saved Leicester Fosse from oblivion.

Eleven years later, in May 1908, it was again the venue for another meeting to deal with a Leicester Fosse financial crisis.

This time it was a public meeting called by the Club's Chairman, W.H. Squires.

The Leicester Fosse team **(Picture 05)** had just been promoted for the first time to the First Division of the Football League. To meet the challenge of playing in the top flight, a meeting at the Temperance Hall was arranged to ask for financial support from the public.
William Squires informed the meeting that £4,000-£5,000 was needed for the Club to be in a position to compete in the First Division, that the wages bill and expenses amounted to £100 per week and that it cost £200 a week to run the club. He also stated that that the reserve strength of the Club wasn't adequate for the top flight and that six first class reserves would cost between £1,500 and £2,000. When they heard this news 'the audience gasped.'

The Chairman then appealed to fans to buy between them at least 1,500 shares in order to secure the finances.

However, unlike the positive outcome of the 1897 Temperance Hall meeting which saved the Club from extinction, the outcome of the 1908 meeting was negative.

Only 80 extra shares were issued. This meant that, in the short term, Leicester Fosse were relegated after only one season in the top division, and in the long term the Club was bedevilled with financial problems until it was wound up in 1919 to be reconstituted as Leicester City Football Club.

As for the venue of these historic meetings, the Temperance Hall was used for many years as a cinema (the Prince's Theatre and then the Essoldo) **(Picture 06)** before it was demolished in 1961 to be replaced by the building pictured here **(Picture 07).** Although no longer a hotel, Thomas Cook's Temperance Hotel building next door still stands.

THE
GRANBY BARBERS
WELCOME
07