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 Leicester Castor Sole Cutting Company, Humberstone Gate

01

A key figure in Leicester's huge boot and shoe industry in the early 20th century was Whetstone-born Arthur Needham **(Picture 01).** He was also a major figure in the history of Leicester City Football Club.

Arthur was an innovator in the sole cutting aspect of the footwear industry. In 1911, he founded the 'Leicester Castor Sole Cutting Company' and established a factory at 91, Humberstone Gate **(Picture 02)** The site today is occupied by the Nottingham Oddfellows Club **(Picture 03)** This factory became the hub of the Needham family's immense contribution, (which lasted for over half a century) to the history of Leicester City Football Club.

This was because Arthur's factory thrived to such an extent that by 1919 he was in a financial position to help establish the newly reconstructed Leicester City Football Club, following the demise of the old Leicester Fosse Football Club. Without his money, and the money of four other new investors, together with a financial input from five of the old Fosse directors, League football in Leicester would have disappeared. There would have been no Leicester City Football Club.

02

03

During Arthur's years on the board between 1919 and 1931 and then between 1936 and 39, the Club won two Second Division Championships and came within a point of winning the League Championship.

Arthur was a keen sportsman. As a young man, he won a medal for shooting at Bisley. He was a life member of Leicestershire County Cricket Club. He was also the patron of Reggie Meen who was the British Heavyweight Boxing Champion in 1931 and 1932. Meen fought many times at Granby Halls, as well as other local venues, and often trained for his fights whilst living with the Needham family at Peckleton Manor **(Picture 04).** He is seen here **(Picture 05)** with Arthur and his bull mastiffs underneath an ornamental arch which still exists at Peckleton Manor today.

Arthur's son was Sidney Needham, who also played a major role in Leicester City's history.

From the 1920s onwards, Sidney was the manager of the Leicester Castor Sole Cutting Company. Sidney's daughter Jane Palmer, who still supports Leicester City, has given the Club access to some unique photographs of the factory's operation in its heyday. These photographs, now part of the Club's Digital archive, include Pictures of the Company's delivery van **(Picture 06)** and of Sidney sitting at his desk at the factory, in front of a portrait of his father **(Picture 07).** Other Pictures include the family's car, a luxury Belgian Minerva, **(Picture 08)** together with images of the Company's employees working in the factory **(Picture 09).**

In 1931, Arthur left the board for five years. This framed cartoon **(Picture 10)** belonging to Jane Palmer, dePicturets Arthur Needham's return to the board (along with fellow director William Squires) in 1936.The 'Promotion Hills' reference in the cartoon was prescient as Leicester City became Second Division Champions in 1937

Sidney, still managing the factory, joined the Board of Directors in the same year as his father's return to it in 1936. He went on to be Leicester City director from 1936 until 1940 and from 1941 until 1979. He was also the Club's Chairman twice from 1961 until 1964 and from 1975 until 1978.

Between them, Arthur and Sidney served on the Board for 57 years.

This was an immense contribution from the Needham family to the Club and at the centre of this was the successful operation of the Leicester Castor Sole Cutting Company.