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.

03. The Garden Shed where the Club was founded.

It is well known that Leicester City Football Club was founded in 1884, under the name of Leicester Fosse, where a group of young men met in a shed situated in the garden of a house in the Fosse Road area of Leicester.

At one time there was some doubt as to the precise location of the shed, but this issue was incontrovertibly settled in a letter which is now in the Club's archives. This was written about twenty years ago by Gillian Ashby, the granddaughter of one of the young men who met in the shed, Arthur Douglas Ashby.

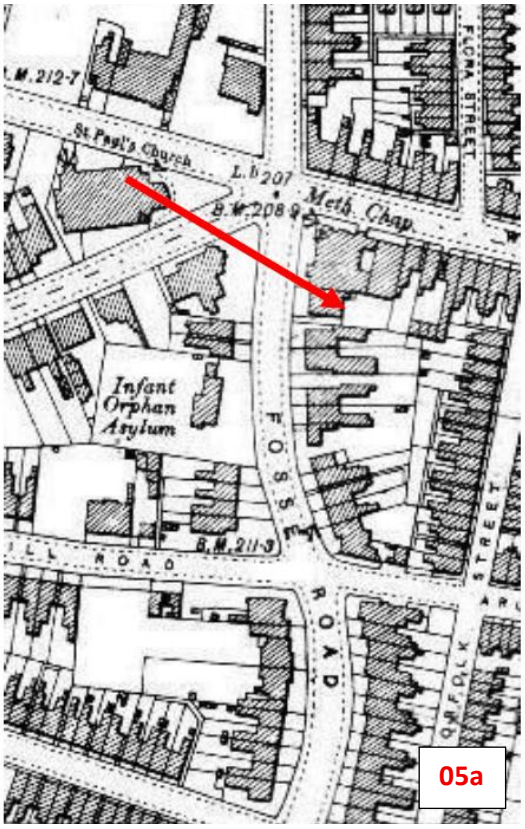
In her letter, Gillian clearly stated that the shed itself belonged to her great-grandfather, William Ashby who owned a boot and shoe factory on Gwendolen Road.

ASHLEIGH
GARDENS
PRIVATE
02

She went on to write that William had owned a large house on Narborough Road, opposite Walton Street. This was a substantial villa house called ‘Ashleigh.’ Although neighbouring houses have survived, Ashleigh has since been demolished to make way for a filling station **(Picture 01).** Its substantial back garden, which stretched back towards Fosse Road, has been replaced by several blocks of flats, appropriately known as Ashleigh Gardens **(Picture 02).** All that remains of the house is the garden’s back wall with its brick arbour **(Picture 03)**

At one time Gillian wondered if the shed could have been in this garden with its good-sized lawn. but she has since discounted this theory.

Even though the site of 'Ashleigh' and its garden is significant because of its links with the family who helped found Leicester Fosse, it wasn't the site of the garden shed. Gillian categorically states in her letter that her father, Douglas W.A. Ashby, who was the son of Arthur Douglas Ashby, one of the founders of the club, had told her that the garden shed in question was in the garden of another house owned by William Ashby **(Picture 04).** This is on Fosse Road Central next to the Methodist church and opposite St Paul's Church on the other side of the road **(Pictures 05a and 05b)** Gillian wrote, *'The house is still there, so close to the Church that it looks like a vicarage. Due to the realignment of the top of King Richard's Road, most of the garden with the shed* **(Picture 06)** *(together with the house next door) is now under this realigned road.'*


St Paul's Church
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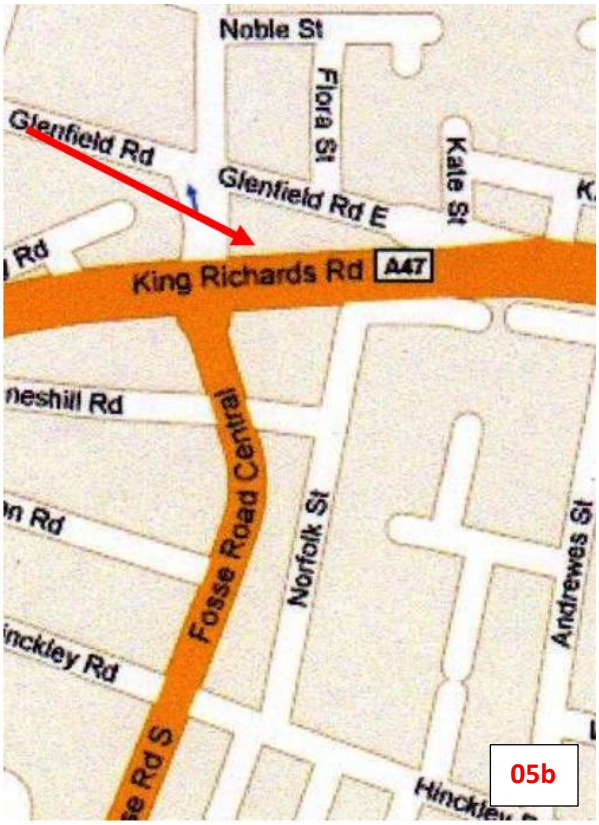
Noble St
Flora St
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Fosse Road Central
Norfolk St
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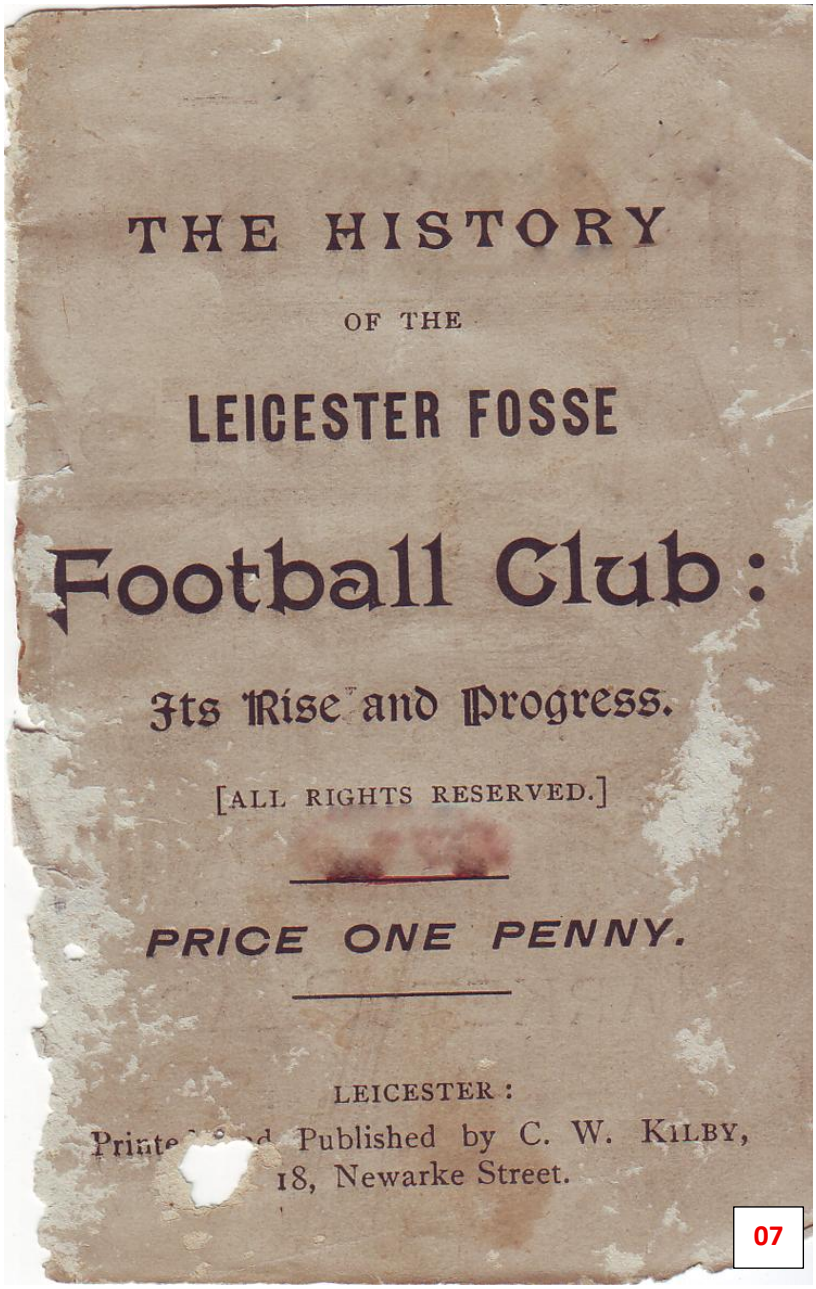
THE HISTORY

OF THE

LEICESTER FOSSE

Football Club:

Its Rise and Progress.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

LEICESTER:

Printed and Published by C. W. KILBY,

18, Newarke Street.

07

In the Club's archive is a little booklet **(Picture 07)** entitled 'the History of the Leicester Fosse Football Club: its Rise and Progress.' Priced one penny the booklet was published in 1893 to mark the start of Leicester Fosse's tenth season since its foundation.

Referring to the initial meeting in the shed, the booklet records that the founder members '*each subscribed the sum of ninepence for the purchase of a ball ….and a further ninepence each , making a total of one and sixpence (18p) for the first season's subscription.'* The booklet then goes on to record that, because the lads who founded the Club *"resided principally in the West End of the town and in the neighbourhood of the old Roman Fosse Way, they adopted the name of 'Fosse' at the suggestion of its active secretary who argued that, as the Fosse Way was known throughout the length and breadth of the land, so should the new football club be known in the future."*

The 'active secretary' who made this suggestion was Frank Gardner who was one of the co-authors of the booklet. In recent years, the City Council has installed 142 heritage panels around Leicester celebrating the city's 2,000-year-old history.

Leicester City Football Club plays a hugely important part in the life of the city so it was fitting that in 2020, the Council, in conjunction with the Football Club, erected a new heritage panel **(Picture 08)** telling the story of the foundation of Leicester Fosse. It is placed opposite William Ashby's house on Fosse Road Central where 137 years ago, a group of young footballers met in the garden shed to form a football club which instead, of being known (in the words of Frank Gardner) *'throughout the length and breadth land,'* is now known throughout the footballing world.