Date: 30 November 1895
Opposition: Leicester Fosse
Competition: League

Mercury				30 November 1895

Liverpool Mercury,
AND LANCASHIRE, CHESHIRE, AND GENERAL ADVERTISER.

LIVERPOOL v. LEICESTER FOSSE.

The return engagement between these clubs took place at Leicester on Saturday, before 7000 to 8000 spectators. For some reason the Liverpool side underwent a change, and the teams were lined up as follows:—Liverpool—M'Queen, goal; Goldie and Wilkie, backs; M'Cartney, Keech, and Holmes, half-backs; M'Vean, Ross, Bradshaw, Beeton, and Geary, forwards. Leicester Fosse—Thraves, goal; Bailey and Davy, backs; Brown, Walker, and Henrys, half-backs; M'Whister, M'Arthur, Lynes, Davies, and Bishop, forwards. Ross having won the toss elected to play up-hill, but with an oblique wind in favour of his team. Immediately on starting the home men went away with a great rush, and their left wing forced a corner off Wilkie, and the ball being sent among the ruck of players in front of goal was, after bobbing about a few seconds, sent past M'Queen through a forest of legs by Davies. This early and quite unexpected success had a most inspiring effect upon the Fosse men, and they played strongly ever afterwards. However, as the result of excellent combination between the Liverpool forwards the Leicester defence was subjected to a prolonged spell of pressure, and several shots were levelled at Thraves, but that custodian was in a happy mood and met everything in the way of shots with confidence. Corner after corner was obtained, but the visitors seemed unable to get a point. An occasional burst away by Bishop and Davies on the left wing, or the two Macs on the right wing, now and then eased the pressure upon their goal, but Wilkie and Goldie were difficult to pass, and in this manner the game continued to half-time, the Liverpool forwards and half backs having all the play, but making nothing of their opportunities. Just previous to the whistle sounding Ross brought Bradshaw back into the centre, and sent Geary on the extreme left. On restarting, the pace, which had been maintained at an exceedingly fast rate, was in no ways altered, and then commenced a fierce struggle. Having the slight advantage of the cross wind the home team become more assertive than before, and often placed Wilkie and Goldie in tight corners, but excellent, and at the same time cool, work by M'Queen saved any further damage. Again the Liverpool vanguard assumed the upper hand, and were virtual masters of the situation, but failed to reach the desired spot, although a goal was rushed through from a free kick, and disallowed. Just before time was called, Bishop dashed away after a long spell of attack by Liverpool, and was undoubtedly offside when he received the ball, but the referee failed to see the point, and having a clear field this speedy player got the best of Goldie and centred squarely, with the result that M'Arthur coming up at top speed in the front of goal met the pass and drove the ball into the net with terrific force. Right up to time Liverpool were pressing but could not penetrate the grand defence of Bailey, Davy, and Thraves, and the Fosse won a most meritorious victory by 2 goals to nil.

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Liverpool are going from bad to worse at best their forwards are, and unmistakably one reason for this unwished-for state of affairs is the constant chopping and changing they have been subjected to. When they emerged from the Woolwich match in such a magnificent manner a fortnight ago, it was generally believed that they had turned their backs upon any further disaster, but that victory would appear to be a mere flash in the pan, and the same reason which caused the Liverpool eleven to lose a point against Burnley was also the cause of the crushing defeat at Leicester. Primarily the fault lies with the forwards, and until they vary their methods they will assuredly receive other castigations from the remaining clubs to be visited. That there is something wrong with this department is proved by the fact that, although they monopolised the lion's share of the play on Saturday, yet they could not once break down the opposition behind them. During the first month of the season the front rank scored 21 goals for five matches during the second month, 20 goals for six matches; and during the third month seven goals for five matches so it will be easily seen by the above comparative figures that the result of the forwards' work of late has been of a very poor quality. The game on Saturday was a tremendously fast one throughout, and, as admitted by the Leicester people afterwards, was the very best contest seen on the ground. The great pace kept the excitement up to fever heat, and it appeared to a keen observer that the Liverpool team were likely to wear their opponents down, but right to the finish the Fosse men were in the game as the visitors. The battle royal really lay between the Liverpool forwards and the Leicester backs and goalkeeper, who between them fought out the greater portion of the ninety minutes, as was the case against Newcastle and Grimsby, and it redounds very much to the credit of Thraves, Bailey, and Davy that they kept their charge intact against such formidable attacking agents, who generally seemed capable of doing anything with the leather except putting it correctly into the net. The Anfield men could obtain possession under most unfavourable circumstances, could also easily dodge and get round the half-backs, and call forth enthusiastic applause and unstinted admiration for their excellent combination: but when it came to the finishing point, not one of the team could put in a thoroughly decent shot. Of course Thraves had many a shot to stop, but most of these came straight at him, and were not characterised with strength. A point which bothered the visitors exceedingly, but which they should have guarded and made allowances for, was the smallness of the ground. In fact, it can be safely stated that it appeared to be the smallest ground [illegible]

it appeared to be the smallest ground visited. It is sometimes well to read what others think and say of the team, and therefore the following paragraph from a Leicester paper will be acceptable:—"The Liverpool forwards were playing in excellent style, and their [illegible] passing was continuously admired and cheered. "A further effort was made by Davies and Boyle, but the Liverpool forwards were having the best of the game." "Still pressing heavily, Liverpool forced another corner, but again the shooting of the visitors was most defective." The tone of these clippings only goes to prove what has already been written—that the forwards, [illegible] whom are famed as great shots and goal getters —are no better against a strong and determined defence than a lot of beginners. M'Queen may be accounted unfortunate for having two goals scored against him, as he had no [illegible] chance with the two points obtained. Wilkie was the better and safer of the backs as Go'die displayed an inclination to run too far away from his charge, appearing to trust to his speed to overhaul any invader, and he certainly met a man as fast as himself in Boyle, and by lying down the field allowed the [illegible] wing to get clean away—although the latter was distinctly offside—and bring about the eventual downfall of his citadel. The halves were not up to their usually high standard. Keech actually found wanting, and consequently throwing a lot of extra work upon both Holmes and M'Cartney, who thus had to neglect their own duties to cover the delinquencies of the centre-half. Holmes played as usual, which is the highest praise that can be awarded him, and M'Cartney met an equal success on the other side: in fact he was everywhere, and seemed to simply revel in hard work. Enough has been said of the forwards to show their particular and general weakness, but the directors were ill-advised, whether by Ross or not, to make no less than three alterations in the forward team who did so splendidly at Woolwich. As late events have proved, Hannah is the best outside left the club possess, and a more honest worker is not easily to be found. The greatest sufferer among the lot is Geary. He has had a chequered career of late years, and certainly has not, like another great centre forward, J. Goodall, been the greatest of successes in his old position, but was without doubt giving great promise of becoming a fine outside right, as shown by his play at Leicester and Anfield; yet, to suit the caprice of someone —it can certainly be nothing else—he is first placed in the centre on Saturday and then relegated to the other wing, a place he will never shine in, not being a left-footer. Becton and Geary, while in the centre, were the only men to make any decent attempts at shooting, while Bradshaw, who is in the same unfortunate position as Geary, being first in the centre

Compiled by Graeme Riley