

# Wimbledon Common

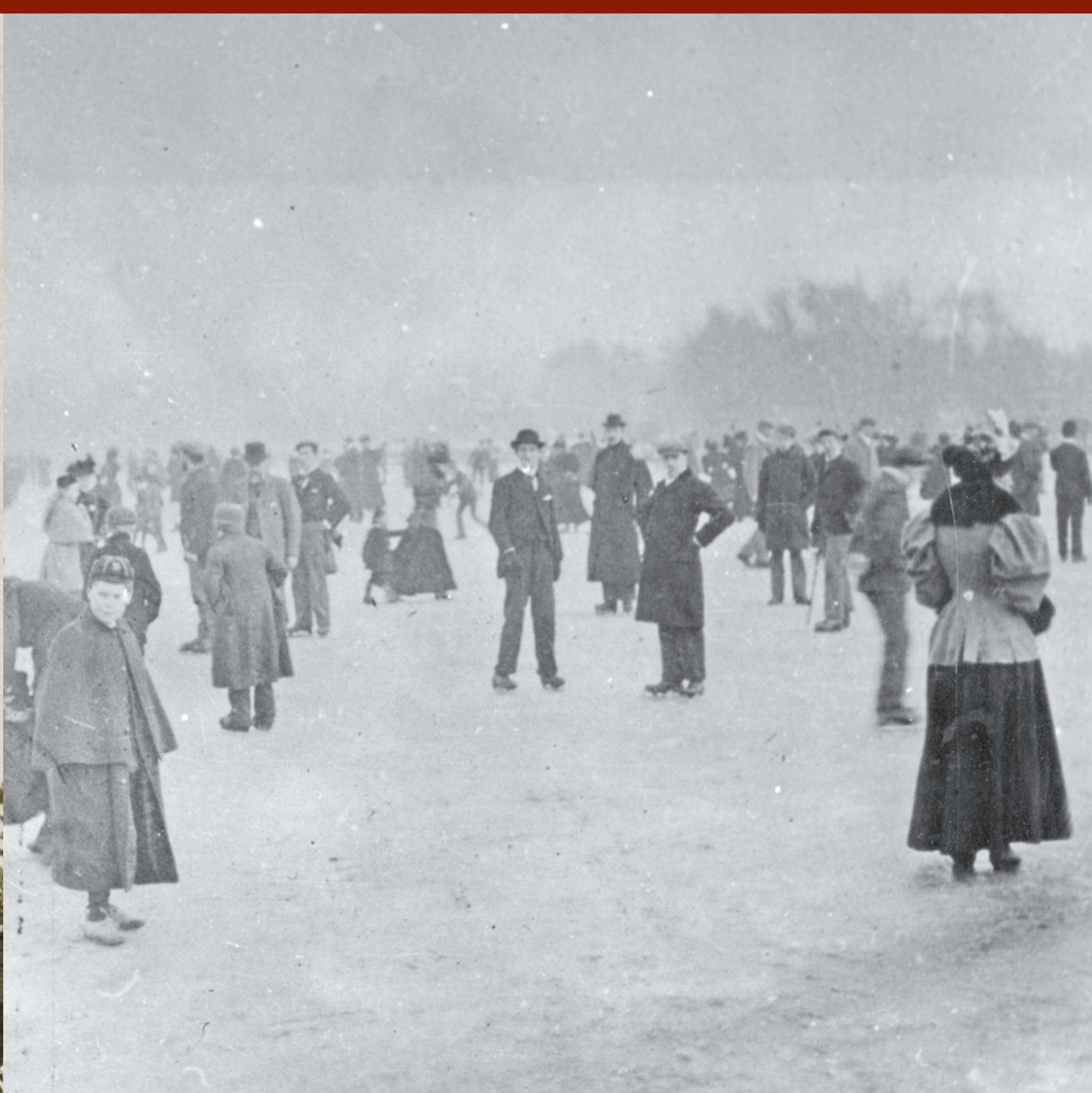
A beautiful green space in Wimbledon, the Common has been famous for many things over the years, from recreational rifle-shooting to litter picking. The National Rifle Association's summer meeting took place here from 1860 to 1889. In the 1970s, the Common became famous as the home of loveable, litter-conscious children's television characters, the Wombles.

Wimbledon Common was nearly sold off to developers. The law that made it public land in 1871 became the template for protecting commons around the country. Before then, the land belonged to the Lord of the Manor of Mortlake. Largely unsuitable for growing crops, it was used mostly for grazing cattle and sheep. By the 1860s, the Spencer family owned the Common.

Earl Spencer wanted to turn part of it into a park and sell the rest to developers. Local landowners fought back; they wanted Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath to remain open land for public use. Earl Spencer eventually agreed, and the Common was saved.

Photo reproduced by permission of London Borough of Merton

Photo reproduced by permission of London Borough of Merton



The windmill, Wimbledon Common

Skaters on a frozen pond, Wimbledon Common c. 1888

Watercolour by Frederick Charles Nightingale (1835–1916), showing Caesar's Camp, Wimbledon Common in 1865 before the earthworks were damaged

'Caesar's Camp 1865' Watercolour by Frederick Charles Nightingale (1835–1916)

Photography by Ian Skelton

Photography by Ian Skelton

