

# The National Rifle Association

Which sport is Wimbledon famous for? It wasn't always tennis or football. The National Rifle Association held its annual national meeting on Wimbledon Common between 1860 and 1889. The event was so popular that an extra railway platform was built for the trainloads of visitors.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert opened the first of the annual meetings. They travelled to the Common in a procession and passed under a specially made triumphal arch. *The Times* reported that locals decorated the streets and shut up shop to celebrate.

The shooting competitions lasted for two weeks and became a key event in the 'London Season'. There was music, fireworks and royalty. Much tea was drunk: 12 whole chests' worth in 1863. People started to complain about bad behaviour outside the official camp and there were outbreaks of cholera and smallpox. New powerful rifles made the games more dangerous. The last event on the Common was in 1889.