

► While the majority of London's tennis clubs, as at Bexley, have found it necessary to replace their original timber clubhouses with modern, functional, if regrettably anonymous buildings, members of **Beckenham Cricket and Tennis Club** decided in 1996 to buck the trend. The result, seen here at their archetypically leafy suburban ground in **Foxgrove Road**, is one of the best restored, and oldest functioning timber framed pavilions in London (see *page 101*). As such, it was listed Grade II in 2013.

On the opposite side of the ground sits the 1960s pavilion of the cricket club. This was formed in 1866, while the tennis section followed in 1879. Within a year ladies were admitted, in such numbers that in c.1896 this separate pavilion was built for their use. Later extended in 1906, it took today's Beckenham members eight years to complete the restoration.

Visiting the ground today it is hard to imagine that for one week in every June from 1886 to 1996 Foxgrove Road was the venue of a pre-Wimbledon tournament as important as its counterpart at the Queen's Club. Known as **The Kent All-Comers' Championships**, the event drew legions of top international players, among them the Brazilian **Maria Bueno**, to whom the renovated pavilion lounge (*right*) was dedicated in 2003.

Facilities at the tournament may have been relatively basic, as the aerial view from 1965 indicates (*below right*). The stands were all temporary, and the show courts were laid out on the cricket pitch.

Yet Beckenham was no sleepy backwater. In 1963 it became the world's first tennis tournament to be sponsored (by Rothmans), and five years later was the first grass tournament to be held in the new, so called Open Era, in which professionals were at last allowed to compete alongside amateurs.

But these developments were also to lead to the Beckenham tournament's demise after 1996, by which time other pre-Wimbledon events, particularly Queen's, had become major, televised affairs, slotted into an increasingly packed international calendar.

Foxgrove Road is therefore a rather quieter place of late, but with a pedigree, and a pavilion, that occupies an esteemed place in London's tennis history.



The first view of the ground from 1965 indicates the facilities at the tournament may have been relatively basic, as the aerial view from 1965 indicates (*below right*). The stands were all temporary, and the show courts were laid out on the cricket pitch.