

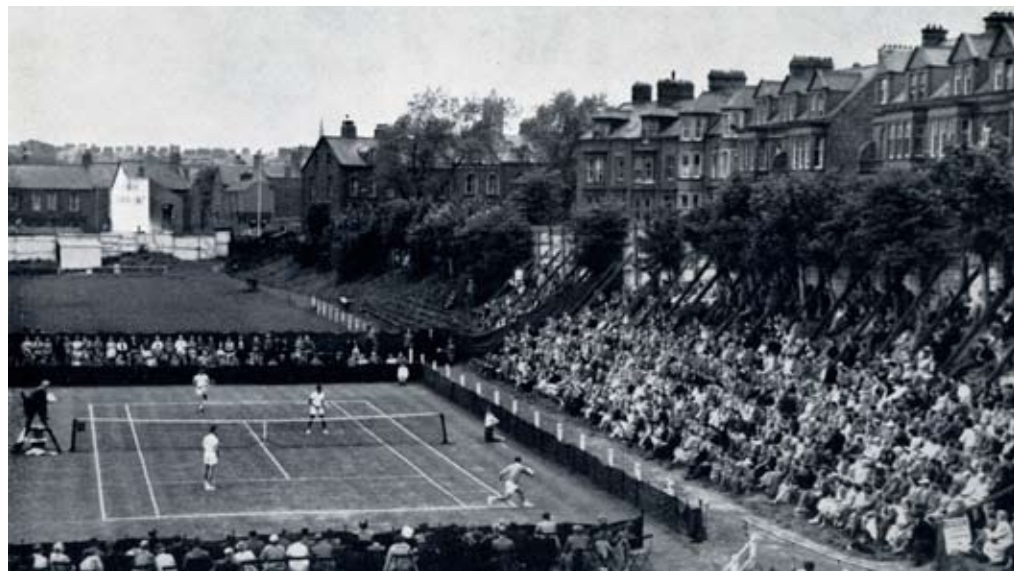
▲ Although **Ashbrooke** was seen for years as an exclusive club, it never shied away from fund-raising events, such as this exhibition match between a team of Canadians and representatives of the recently formed Yorkshire Baseball League.

The League was one of several set up in England during the 1930s in an unsuccessful attempt to popularise baseball. Ashbrooke lost £50 on the day.

Other more lucrative events included a military tattoo in 1951, boxing, displays of Cossack sword dancing and a two day cricket match, Durham v. Australia, in June 1926 (*above right*), which drew a packed house of 20,678 spectators on the first day, plus many more watching from neighbouring windows.

Also staged were international hockey matches, an England rugby trial, and in 1955 a men's county tennis championship between Sunderland and Durham (*right*).

From 1958–61 Ashbrooke's tennis section also staged several indoor tournaments featuring major stars, at the Whitley Bay Ice Rink.



◀ Entered via its own sturdy gates alongside Ashbrooke's three tennis courts, yet almost totally hidden behind tall hedges in the south west corner of the ground, is the **Sunderland Bowling Club**.

Having a bowling green at a sports club is an important asset, for it helps to ensure that once their cricketing, rugby or tennis days are over, members have another reason to stay on, and play on.

Ashbrooke's green opened in 1889, two years after the ground's inauguration, and by 1905 had attracted enough support for the bowlers to club together to build the current pavilion.

Costing £267 and opened on May 18 1906, it was designed by architect Hugh Hedley, who lived close by, on The Grove, and who may well have been a member at Ashbrooke. (He is otherwise remembered as the architect of the Londonderry pub, built in 1901 on Sunderland's High Street West.)

Hedley's pavilion, barely altered since – despite being damaged during air raids in 1943 – with its wonderfully atmospheric wood panelled interior and a delightful elevation facing the green (*left*), is now the second oldest surviving bowls clubhouse in Tyne and Wear, and the sixth oldest sports related building of any type in the region.

It is also, assuredly, one of the most handsome.