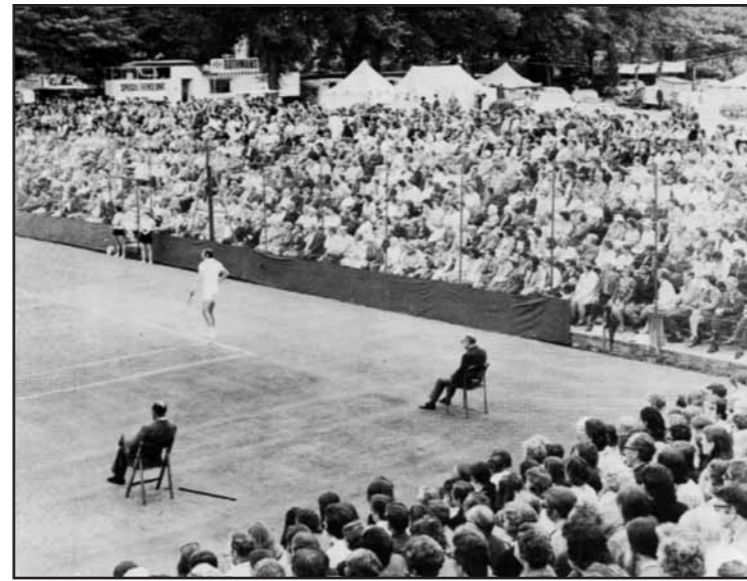


# TENNIS

West Kirby Park opened in September 1901 without sports facilities but demand for tennis and bowling facilities followed immediately. In 1904, when the marshy ground in the Lower Park had settled, the first 2 tennis courts were provided close to Westbourne Grove, now the Children's Playground. In time, 6 were available to meet rising demand for tennis.

By 1924 tennis was very popular and local tournaments had started. So, in 1927, 16 new grass courts were built on the sloping meadowland of the Upper Park and a much-needed children's playground was built on the old courts in the Lower Park.

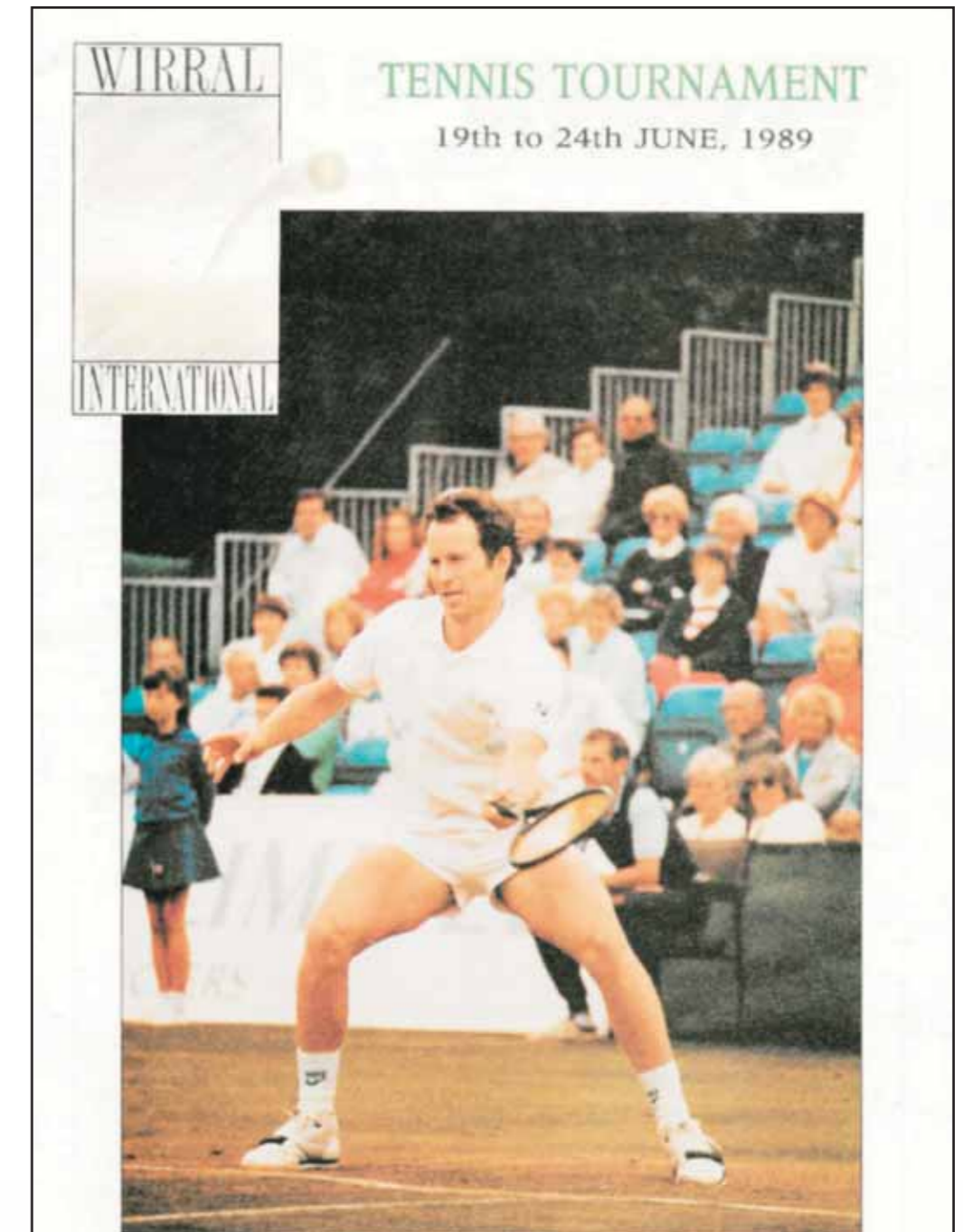


1970 Tournament

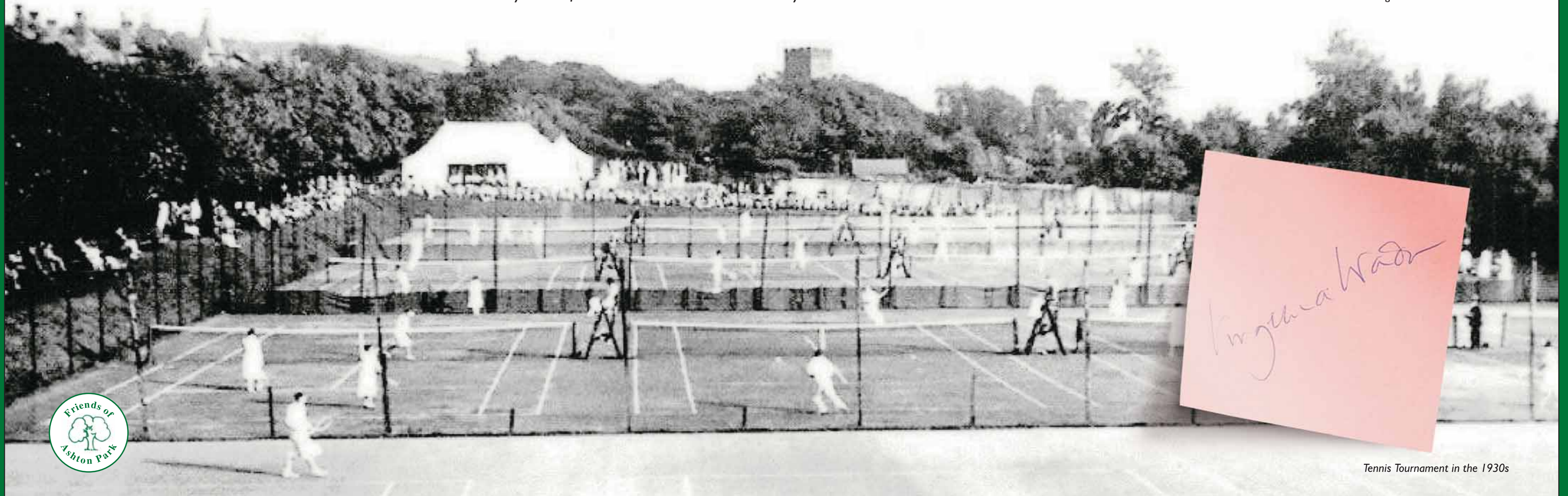
By 1930 tennis tournaments, initially for locals and visitors, were held annually, run by the Urban District Council of Hoylake and West Kirby. Tournaments later incorporated the Merseyside championships with over 400 players competing. It became known as 'Our Little Wimbledon' in the perfect setting of West Kirby Park. After World War Two, the tournament was re-launched in 1949 as the Hoylake and West Kirby Open Lawn Tennis Tournament and started to attract players from around the world; by 1969 it became the North of England Lawn Tennis Championship. The terracing at the south east end of the courts was built in the early 1960s to house the crowds attending, attracting 20,000 in the week. The 1960s and early 1970s were the glory days when West Kirby attracted names such as John Newcombe, Manuel Santana, Margaret Smith/Court, Virginia Wade, Yvonne Goolagong, Roger Taylor, Ann Jones, Mike Sangster, Billie-Jean King. After that West Kirby suffered from competition from other UK tournaments and the advent of professionalism resulted in players chasing prize money round the world and becoming less interested in smaller tournaments.

There was a revival in 1988 with the emergence of the Wirral International Tennis Tournament and we briefly saw Jim Courier, John McEnroe, Goran Ivanisevic, Boris Becker and Pete Sampras. The last major tournament was in 1994.

*Funded by Grant from the Wirral West Community Fund*



1989 Wirral International Tennis Tournament Visitor Programme



Tennis Tournament in the 1930s

