

## History of Real Tennis in Ireland

Real tennis seems to have developed in the streets or monasteries of medieval France or Italy, but it was being played in Ireland by the early 1600s. An assassination interrupted play at a tennis court off Thomas Street in Dublin in 1609, and there must surely have been another court at the 'Tennis-court lane' marked on John Speed's map of Dublin of 1610.

Ireland was part of the later nineteenth century growth in the game: the court on Earlsfort Terrace was built in the mid-1880s by the Guinness family, and there was great interest in the World Championship match which was played there over the course of a week at the end of May 1890.



The World Championship, Dublin, 1890, as recorded in *The Graphic*.



Looking upwards to the service end wall



To join the IRTA please contact:

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## Dublin Tennis Court Update



## Hope for the Dublin Tennis Court



**Glazed roof of the  
Dublin court**

We are delighted to announce that we have been recently in touch with the Office of Public Works. With University College Dublin having vacated the building, the Office of Public Works has indicated that they will work with us to restore the Dublin Real Tennis Court to play. Discussions between the IRTA

and the Office of Public Works are at a very early stage, but this is definitely a large step towards achieving our goals. We are very grateful to all our members and supporters who have helped us reach this point, and we will publish more news as the situation unfolds.



**Original chase markings**

## History of the IRTA's Campaign



**Interior view showing full height partition**

Dublin's surviving real tennis court is on Earlsfort Terrace, near St Stephen's Green, in the city centre next to the complex of buildings which was formerly home to University College Dublin and which have, since 1980, housed the National Concert Hall. Constructed in 1885 by Edward Guinness, the court was the venue for the World Championship in 1890. It was presented to the Irish State in 1939 by Rupert Guinness, with the hope that it would continue in use. Sadly, however, since the time of the gift the court has seen no tennis, being used first as a gymnasium, and more recently as an engineering laboratory by UCD.

The Irish Real Tennis Association was founded in 1998 and promotes the game in Ireland as well as working for the return of the Earlsfort Terrace court to play. In anticipation of the reopening of the Dublin court, the IRTA organises visits to overseas clubs for introductory sessions, matches,



**IRTA members in Oxford 2007**

and tournaments. To date, five Open and Closed annual championship tournaments have been held.

For more information regarding the IRTA and these visits to overseas clubs visit:

[www.irishrealtennis.ie](http://www.irishrealtennis.ie)



**Blind wall extending south at the hazard end  
along Earlsfort Terrace**