



About 1 Kildare Street
Guided Tour

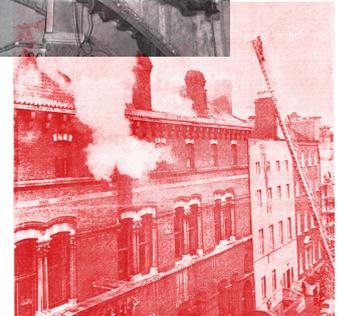
af Alliance Française
Dublin

Chronology

- 1859-61 Construction period.
- 1861 The Club opens.
- 1922 First shot fired in the Irish Civil War, accidentally, on one of the pillars.
- 1954 The Club divides the building. The northern half is sold to an insurance company.
- 1967 A fire damages the top floor of the building.
- 1971 Significant changes to the interior in the northern half of the building. Removal of the stairhall and erection of mezzanines.
- 1974 Alliance Française moves into the building. Inauguration by the then French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac on November 15th.
- 2023 First guided tour to celebrate 140th anniversary of the Alliance Française network.



de la République Française, Monsieur Jacques Chirac, a inauguré officiellement le 15 novembre 1974 au 100 rue de Kildare Street à Dublin qui abriteait d'anciennement le Collège Grégoire de la rue de Clarendon, l'Alliance Française de Dublin et le Service Culturel de l'Ambassade de France de Mr. Garrett FitzGerald, Ministre Mandatés des Affaires Étrangères.





The Kildare Street Club

Founded in 1782, the Kildare Street Club was an exclusive gentlemen's club. In 1858 there was a commission for a new building to house the Kildare Street Club. Already housed on Kildare Street, the club assembled together a site that ended up comprising three 18th century houses on Kildare Street and one 18th century house on Leinster Street South. This provided a prominent, L-shaped, corner site for the architects. Its new premises opening in 1861.

HER MAJESTY'S VISIT TO IRELAND : NEW CLUBHOUSE, KILDARE-STREET, DUBLIN,—SEE PRECEDING



GROUND IN THE KILDARE STREET CLUB

Architecture

The Kildare Street Club is a Victorian Gothic building, influenced by Venetian and Byzantine styles. The predominant materials used are red brick, stone, timber windows and wrought iron panels.

Construction took place between 1859 and 1861, to a design by architects Sir Thomas Deane Knt., Son and Woodward. The design was predominantly the work of Benjamin Woodward, who was originally apprenticed to a civil engineer.

On entering, a small entrance hall led to the famed inner grand hall, which was top-lit. This space was arcaded on 2 storeys, and had a buttressed stair that sprang across the hall.

The space was richly decorated with stone carvings; pierced stone balustrades with geometric patterns; elaborate tiling; and flora and fauna motifs on the stairs and columns.





Sculpture: Fauna & Flora

Stone carvings on the exterior of the building include foliage, animals and other creatures. They have been variously attributed to Charles William Harrison, the O'Shea Brothers, and Charles William Purdy.

What animals and figures do we see here? Monkeys playing billiards; a serenading shrew; a hound chasing a rabbit; polar bears confronting a harpoon-wielding mariner; a snake and a frog; lizards; mice; more rabbits; a hen; a dolphin; a phoenix and a dragon.



When you walked in from the street, after passing under the porch and through a small lobby, past a Porter's Office and Waiting Room, there was a Coffee Room, a Bar, a Dining Room and a Morning Room. Upstairs there was a Writing Room, Card Room and Drawing Room. To the rear of the building a top-lit Racquet Court was provided, along with Dressing Rooms for members, Billiards Rooms and Smoking Rooms. There were 15 bedrooms for club members upstairs. The basement housed kitchens, toilets and the male servants' accommodation. Bedrooms for female servants were separated at attic level.

The main changes were made in 1971 when the large interior spaces were carved up by a development company, and mezzanine spaces were inserted. The main stair hall – considered Dublin's finest legacy from the Victorian era – was demolished.



Interiors





The Alliance Française Years

- 1974** Formerly based at 18 Herbert Street, Alliance Française gradually moves its operations to Kildare Street.
- 1986** The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs purchases the building for the Alliance Française Dublin.
- 2003** Innovative laser treatment restoration of the exterior walls & carvings by Paul Arnold Architects.
- 2006** Extensive interior renovation and refurbishment works on all four floors.
- 2016** Opening of *The French Library*, a digital and multiform space unique in Ireland at the time.
- 2023** Creation of a mural in the building lobby by French artist Claire Prouvost.

Long associated with the British high society, the listed Heritage building has since the 70's been a space for intercultural exchanges between Ireland and the cultures of the French-speaking world. It is regarded as the *destination for a truly French experience in Dublin.*

alliance-francaise.ie



Donation