



# The Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland

**Talks by Nick Reddan to the  
London and South East Group and Irish Branch of the Irish  
Genealogical Research Society in late July 2023 by Zoom**

# Who am I and why am I involved with the Registry of Deeds



- I started doing family history in 1988
- A number of my ancestral lines have people who lived in Ireland
- All of them were born prior to civil registration in Ireland
- William Swan CROKER from Dublin arrived in 1840
- John REDDAN from Co Clare in 1841
- William MUNGOMERY from Co Cork in 1854
- My great-grandmother Ellen BARRETT from Co Galway arrived in 1878

# Who am I and why am I involved with the Registry of Deeds



- **John REDDAN** from Tulla was a Roman Catholic carpenter who seems to have left few records in Ireland. His death certificate indicates he was born c1810.
- **William MUNGOMERY** was a mariner and stated on his seaman's ticket he was born in Passage West, Co Cork. I have not been able confirm this information.
- **Ellen BARRETT** was from the townland of Ballinduff (Ardrahan parish) Co Galway and her father John and probably brother Ferdinand (Fardy) appear as tenants on part of it in the Griffith Valuation. The family still has an interest in the land.

# Who am I and why am I involved with the Registry of Deeds



- **William Swan CROKER's family was Anglo-Irish and came to Ireland in the late 1500s settling in the Cork-Waterford area. He left a memorandum about his relations including from the COOTE and SWAN families. Various Bourke Landed Gentry books treat the CROKER family but the only mention of this line is the second marriage of Wm's father Thomas Swan CROKER to Anne WOLFE. Moreover, gives the wrong father.**
- **Early on I had read that Registry of Deeds might be useful for family history.**

# Initial encounters



- I gave myself the task of sorting out various CROKER lines using the RoD
- I was fortunate that in 1992 my wife was posted to London for three years
- Around Easter 1992 I made my first trip to Ireland and went to the RoD on a cold and wet day when its grey stones were dark and foreboding. I achieved very little that day but saw I needed to be more systematic in my approach.

# IGRS



- **About this time the IGRS reopened at the Irish Club in London and I became a regular visitor on Saturday afternoons.**
- **People encountered there included Michael Leader, George Chartres, Frances Jane French, Anne Chamney and Roz McCutcheon from whom I picked up a lot about the RoD**
- **To this I added my use of spreadsheets and databases**
- **At this time access to the RoD was either in person or by viewing microfilms that had to be ordered in. This made progress slow.**

# IGRS



- **A group of IGRS members shared films so we could get more than what we ordered.**
- **Over the next couple of years, I made many trips to Ireland with multiple days at the RoD. I would work from opening to closing abstracting about 80 memorials in a day.**
- **One of my early successes was finding a deed that gave the death date of Thomas Swan CROKER**
- **Over the next several years continued to make progress and good discoveries**



# What is the Registry of Deeds

- Originally set up in 1708 to enforce the rules of land ownership under the penal laws
- The aim of the penal laws was to make things difficult for Roman Catholics
- The incentive for registration was that registered deeds took precedence over unregistered ones
- Over time over time registration became a way of proving title to land
- While predominantly about land transactions there are also ones (financial instruments and partnerships)



# What is the Registry of Deeds – What was registered



- **Anything that could involve claims of land**
- **Wills**
- **Leases, releases, agreement, sales, conveyances**
- **Rent charges, mortgages, other financial instruments**
- **The forms of deeds registered were indentures and deeds poll**
  - A deed poll was written out once and given by the grantor to the grantee
  - An indenture was written out as many times as there are parties to the deed on a single piece of parchment which were then separated by a wavy cut

# What is the Registry of Deeds – Memorials and registration



- **The registration process was:**

- One of the parties made a memorial of the deed which might be a verbatim copy or summarised version of the deed
- This was then witnessed by at least two people one of whom also witnessed the original deed
- One of the witnesses to the memorial made a oath before a Deputy Registrar at the Registry in Dublin or if sufficiently remote from Dublin before a judge or a commissioner for affidavits
- The memorial was then given a registration number and copied into the memorial transcription books (tombstone volumes)
- While most memorials were registered within a few months of execution, some were registered many years after the event

# A deed



- I have been lucky in that some deeds involving my gg grandfather are in the National Archives in the Green Papers
- [P1020787.JPG](#)
- [P1020786.JPG](#)
- [P1020785.JPG](#)

# A memorial

- [d183820139a.jpg](#)
- [d183820139b.jpg](#)





# An entry in a transcription book

- 184020139

N<sup>o</sup> 139  
Croker  
& an<sup>r</sup>.  
to  
Greene  
Per 3<sup>rd</sup> of Nov<sup>r</sup>.  
1882 as 1/4 part  
306<sup>5</sup>

To the Registrar appointed by Act of Parliament for registering Deeds with and  
so forth in Ireland. I, M. M. O'Connell of the said indenture bearing date second day of Nov<sup>r</sup>.  
in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred thirty eight made between Mrs. Anne  
Croker of Delcanagh Cottage in the Co. of Dublin widow & Heir of Tho. Swan Croker late  
of Clontarf in the Co. of Dublin Esq<sup>r</sup>: decessed and William Swan Croker of Woodliff Street  
in the Co. of Great Brit<sup>n</sup>: only son & Heir at Law of the s<sup>d</sup>. Tho. Swan Croker of the one part  
and

a true copy

# What is the Registry of Deeds – Memorials and registration



- **Entries were then made in the indexes maintained by the Registry**
- **Grantors Index**
  - Grantors were people giving up a claim to the land
  - In the case of a simple lease a grantor would be the lessor
  - Their index gives the full name of the grantor and up to 1832 only the family of the grantee
- **Townland index**
  - Organised by county and in later years by county and barony
  - It gives the family of one of the grantors and one of the grantees

# What is the Registry of Deeds – Memorials and numbers



- **By 1833 there were over 600,000 memorials of deeds registered**
- **By the mid 1800s there were over a million**
- **Each memorial had at least one grantor and at least one grantee and at least two witnesses**
- **The project website has indexed 15 memorials with more than 100 names and two with more than 1000 names**
- **So at the very least there are 2.4 million names included upto 1833 and well over 4 million by the mid 1800s**

# Why is it of interest for family history



- **There are three types of data held in the Registry of Deeds of interest and often these are not available elsewhere**
- **Names**
  - Parties, witnesses, occupiers (adjacent, current and previous), lives
- **Dates**
  - Transaction, birth, death and marriage
- **Places**
  - The land in the deed and residences of other people



# Why is it of interest for family history – Who registered deeds



- **Until the late 1800 most deed involved middle level landlords and middle-class merchants**
- **Even before the removal of the ownership rules in 1782 many Catholics and representatives of Catholic families appear in the memorials**
- **Catholic occupiers are sometimes mentioned**

# Why is it of interest for family history – marriage settlements



- **An important class of deeds for family historians are marriage settlements**
- **These perform a role similar to the pre-nuptial favoured by the rich and famous today**
- **They guarantee some rights and limit others**
- **They may provide a wealth of family information going back a number of generations**

# Indexes



- **The limitations of the RoD mandated indexes is well known**
- **In my searches I trawled through the grantor index for all occurrences of CROKER, COOTE, SWAN and a few others as both grantors and grantees, put them into a database.**
- **Being able to find grantee occurrences is hard work but is a good step forward**
- **The townland indexes while often hard to read are also very useful if you are looking in one or two counties.**

# Project start 2007



- In early 2007 Roz and I were discussing how to improve access to the RoD records.
- She was documenting all the marriage settlements she could find
- I was interested in getting a full name index
- We had discussions on the fields for inclusion and settled on a reasonable model
- Later we added a couple more fields, namely the person code and date added

# Project development



- **Initially as we only had a small number of index entries we displayed them as a series of HTML tables**
- **Eventually the site became database and search driven. With over 560,000 records it is not helpful to dump all records.**
- **In addition, we now have significant numbers of transcriptions of the RoD native indexes**
- **We also have a few hundred transcriptions of memorials**
- **While with 58,000 memorials indexed we are only scratching the surface the project is a very useful tool.**

# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland website



The header of the website features a green background. On the left is a small image of a classical building. In the center, the text "Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland" is displayed in white. On the right, there is a statistics box with the title "Number of index entries" and a grid of numbers: 5, 6, 1, 6, 1, 3. Below this grid, it says "Update of 24 Jul 2023", "434,473 townland index entries last updated 28 Jun 2023", and "47,101 grantor index entries last updated 26 Feb 23". At the bottom of the header is a green navigation bar with white text for "Home", "Search", "Submit", "Browse", "Familysearch navigation aids", and "Guides".

**This is the home page of the Registry of Deeds Index Project**

## Purpose

The purpose of this project is to provide finding aids for the records held at the Registry of Deeds in Dublin. There are three sets of indexes produced by the project:

- The main index is building a name index for the memorial transcription books held at the Registry of Deeds
- The grantors index consists of transcriptions of the Registry of Deeds' grantors indexes
- The townland index consists of transcriptions of the Registry of Deeds' townland indexes

Each of these index databases can be searched on a number of fields. None, of course, is complete. Each has those index entries contributed by the project volunteers.

## Background

The [Registry of Deeds](#) is located in Henrietta Street, Dublin, Ireland and is a repository of records of wills, land transactions in Ireland and other deeds from 1709. While the original purpose of the Registry of Deeds was to enforce rules limiting the land transactions of Catholics, even before the removal of these rules in 1782 many Catholics and representatives of Catholic families appear in the memorials. Many memorials involved people of



# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland website – Search



Search	Submit
<b>Main index entries</b>	
Grantors index transcriptions	
Townland indexes	

- The first part of the website we will look at is the search pages
- We can search the main index of the index transcriptions
- We will go through the options available

# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland website – [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org)

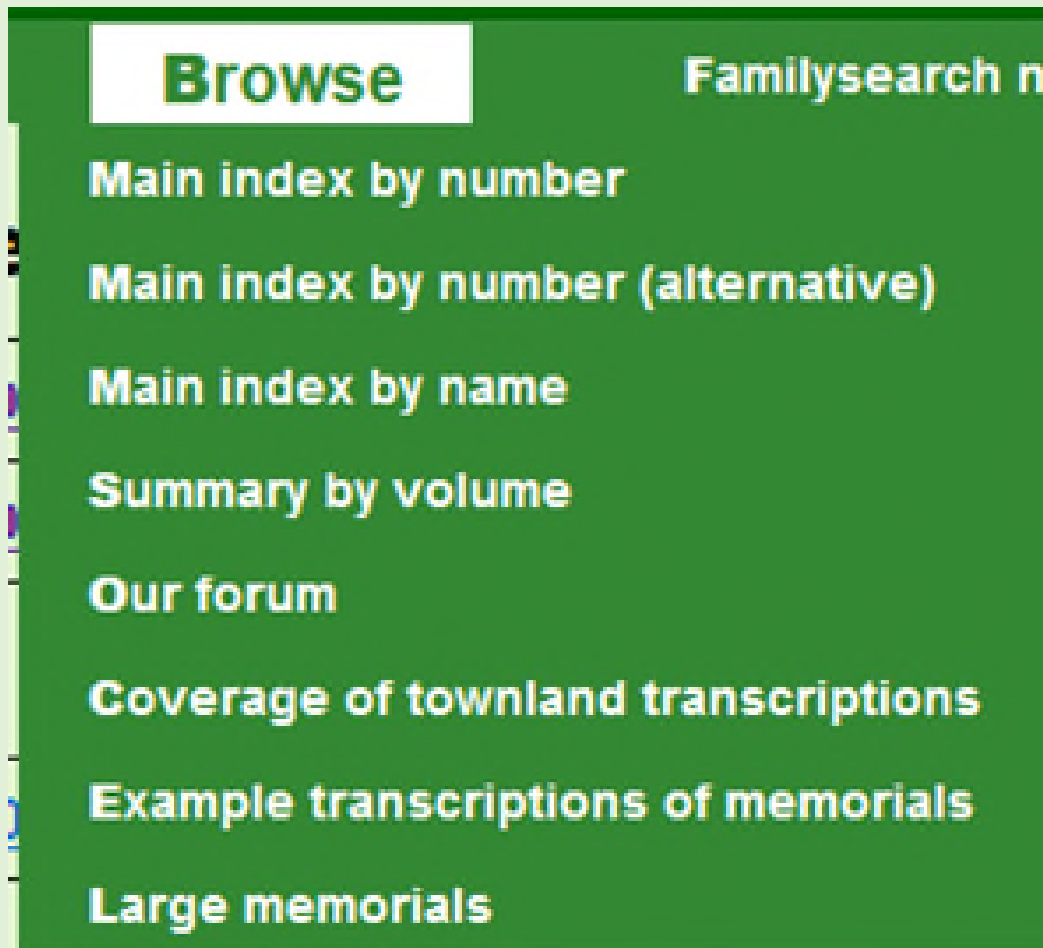


## Familysearch navigation aids

- I have developed a number of tools to make accessing the images on [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) easier
- We will go through each of them



# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland website – Browsing



- The browse tab lets you see the data in a variety of ways
- It will show you about the coverage
- It may help discover things you might miss by searching
- We will demonstrate the options

# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland website – guides



## Guides

Guides to the Registry of Deeds

Order a copy of a memorial from the Registry

See contributor efforts

e-mail the webmaster for assistance

- The site has a number of guides to both the site and the Registry of Deeds
- We will mention a few of them

# Registry of Deeds – web resources



- <https://irishdeedsindex.net/index.php> Project home page
- <https://irishdeedsindex.net/blog/index.php> Project forum for asking and answering questions
- <https://mlarchives.rootsweb.com/listindexes/emails?listname=ir-l-deeds> Mailin list archives some answers to questions about the project – notification about project news
- <https://www.facebook.com/RegistryofDeedsIndexProjectIreland> the project Facebook page – notification about project news
- <https://www.prai.ie/> the Property Registration Authority Ireland

# Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland – contributing



- **Anyone can contribute to the project**
- **The simplest way is to transcribe grantors index entries**
- **The next simplest is to transcribe townland index entries**
- **Contributing index entries to the main index is not complicated and you can do it easily**
- **We will go through all these ways of contributing.**

# Questions

