Lessons learned from the Registry of Deeds Indexing Project

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Why am interested in the Registry of Deeds

- I started looking at the Registry of Deeds nearly 30 years ago
- It has sorted out a number of families for me
- Marriage settlements
- Other deeds
- Family relationships
- Ages

Why is working on the Registry of Deeds considered hard

- Limited finding aids

- A family historian in interested in all people involved in deeds not just the parties

- An act for the Publick Registering of all Deeds, conveyances and wills that shall be made of any Honors, Manors, Lands, tenements or herediments — MDCCVII

- Main provisions:
  - Set up office of Registrar & Stated what should be registered
  - Stated how records should be kept on parchment
  - Mandated grantors and land indexes should be maintained

How I started to use the Registry

- Spreadsheet of grantors index entries so could get the grantees
- To sort out the CROKER family I found all grantors index entries with CROKER as grantor or grantee
- Also looked through the townland index for mentions of CROKER
- This misses many CROKER occurrences in the memorial books
- In 2007 I started the Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland
- Together with Roz McCutcheon we worked out what fields to include in the database and populated it with our then current collections of abstracts. I had about 500 memorials abstracted.

How the project developed

- This is a cloud sourced index
- Now we have nearly 325,000 index records from over 35,000 memorials of deeds
- We also have nearly 75,000 townland index entries and 32,000 grantors index transcriptions
- Since 2017 we have been developing direct links to images of indexes and the memorial books
- We are a long way off indexing the 1,000,000 memorials that were registered to the 1850s

Indexing issues -- Memorials

- Names as written
  - Include family names of people referred to by title
  - Corporations given family name [none]

- Family relationships, ages and titles recorded

- Roles
  - Why are they there

- Residences
  - as written can include alternative modern spellings in square brackets

- Lands not a priority to record all lands as in townland index

- Dates as written

Indexing issues -- other

- Names as above
- Lands as written

All indexes and transcriptions include errors

- There are mistakes in the memorial books
  - Duplicated and simply wrong memorial numbers
  - Missing lines
  - Names changing from say John to James in a transcription book
- Some books and particularly the townland indexes are hard to read
  - Colour images may help
  - Pages are getting worse with more wear
  - Some users of the books do not treat them with respect
- The beauty of electronic indexes is that they can be corrected

Demonstration of some features

- https://irishdeedsindex.net/search/search.php

Conclusions

- The records on the Registry of Deeds are a wonderful source for family and local history

- They should be used more

- Digitised records do not deteriorate with use

- Digitisation provides both an opportunity for preservation and for improvement of quality of the data

- Having high quality finding aids is essential to any digitisation project