



The Registry of Deeds and the Index Project

Nick Reddan

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What is the Registry of Deeds

- The Registry of Deeds was created by Act of the Irish Parliament in 1707
- An act for the Publick Registering of all Deeds, conveyances and wills that shall be made of any Honors, Manors, Lands, tenements or hereditaments — MDCCVII
- It was part of a number of measures called the penal laws that were aimed at restricting the power and influence of Catholics in Ireland
- In particular land tenure rules
- It is the repository of a vast number of records of land and other transactions



Why is it useful

- The Registry is a wonderful resource for family and local historians
- Although the Act says all conveyances should be registered only a proportion were
- Details include:
 - Descriptions of the land and land tenures
 - Information about people



What deeds were registered

- Middle level landlords
- A registered deed took precedence over a unregistered one
- Some families registered a lot and some did not



Why are we 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
- Death dates



Some terminology

- Memorial
- Indentures and deeds Poll
- Parties
- Grantor
- Grantee
- Life
- Witness
- Occupier
- Occupier of adjacent land



Types of deeds registered

- Leases
 - For a set period
 - Contingent period
 - For 3 lives
 - For ever
 - For lives renewable for ever with or without a fine on the fall of a life
- Releases
- Wills
- Rent charges
- Mortgages



Why is working on the Registry of Deeds considered hard

- Limited finding aids
- A family historian is interested in all people involved in deeds not just the parties
- Main provisions in the Act:
 - 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 360,001 index records from nearly 39,000 memorials of deeds
- We also have about 75,500 townland index entries and just over 36,000 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



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
 - We have found one memorial that has been copied into two books [158442](#)
 - We have found instances where two different memorials with the same memorial number [204684](#), [329972](#) and [370899](#)



All indexes and transcriptions include errors

- 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



Observations

- 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