

Ballymurrin Stories -Restoring the Quaker Farmstead

## 1: The First Farmstead

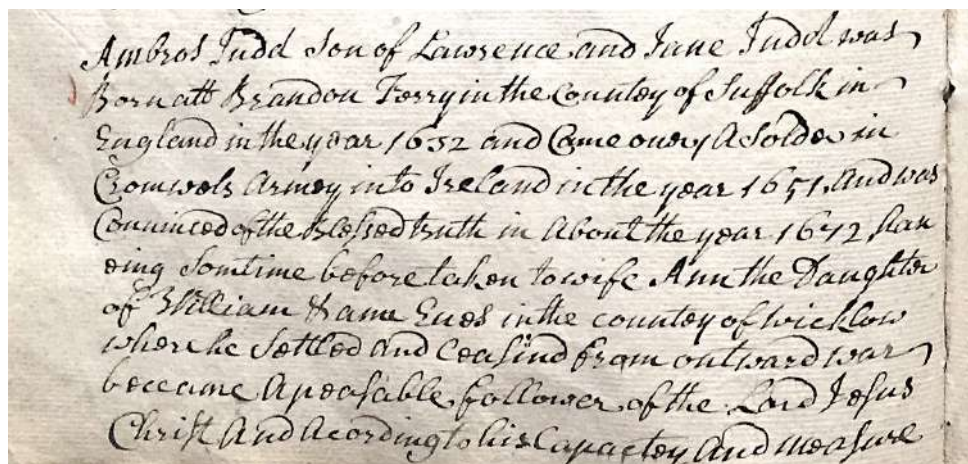
This project was grant assisted by the Wicklow County Partnership

# Ballymurrin Quaker Farmstead

# 1668

Over 350 years ago  
Quakers came to  
Ballymurrin

Philip and Delphine Geoghegan,  
owners of Ballymurrin from 1994



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*The testamoney of friends of Ballyceane Monthly meeting  
Concerning our dear deceased Friend , Ambrose Judd*

**Above:** The text at the top of the page is part of the 'Teastamoney' of friends following the death of Ambrose Judd after his long life, aged 95.

## Ballymurrin: The first Quaker Farmstead in 1668

### General Introduction

The Farmstead project from 1668 would not have happened without the Marriage of Ambrose Judd to Ann Eves. It is fortunate that the 'testamoney of friends...concerning our dearest friend, Ambrose Judd', a eulogy on his long life in 1727, was prepared at the time of his death. It clarified the reason for Ambrose's decision to come to Ireland. It was his decision to "come away A Soldier in Cromwels Army into Ireland in the year 1651". He left Brandon Ferry, Suffolk, England in 1651, aged 19.

After the war he was based in Dunganstown and was able to agree, with the help of the owner of Dunganstown Castle, Sir John Hoey, knight, the perpetual lifetime lease of Ballymurrin Lower from Sir William Parsons, 2nd earl of Rosse, who lived in Milltown, nearby. His repayment of lands as a soldier in Cromwells ' Army made this acquisition of land possible.

However it was twenty years later in 1672, that he became a Quaker. His earlier marriage to Anne Eves, (from a newly settled Quaker family living in Kilmacow, near Redcross village and Ballykeane Quaker Meeting House) in 1667, as likely as not, influenced him to become a Quaker.

We have a record of their first son Robert's birth, in 1668 at 'Ballymoronbeg in the parish of Enisbohin' (now Ennisboyne), from the Quaker records, an indication that the couple were living there at that time.

It is also likely, looking at the timescale, that the building of the earliest farmstead would have been completed in time for Robert's birth in 1668, although that is speculation.

Sadly, the first Quaker Farmstead is the one piece of this fascinating group of buildings in the farmstead which did not survive intact and was left in ruin. Nevertheless the remains reveal enough of the past to be able to describe the content and shape of the building.



The first step for a new landowner, in this case our newly married Quaker couple, would be to make a building to accommodate a family; to safely make space for animals; make a secure cart-and-implement shed, with loft above for storing hay and grain; and an upper platform for sleeping, above the kitchen.

The compact farmstead would have been the first step towards a much larger working farmstead. This **second farmstead**, like the first, had three large spaces, two with large doors for animal and cart access; the third space was a kitchen and family room with access to a bedroom above.

The further buildings, built at much the same time, were the **stables and the cow shed**, which are described separately.

The **farmhouse** was a significant, generously proportioned building, attached to the second farmstead. It centred on a large kitchen and parlour on the ground floor and two large bedroom spaces, each large enough for a family. This could be seen as the culmination of building effort with comfortable, gracious albeit austere living spaces: the Parlour allowing for constituent meetings of local Quakers. The final completion of the living areas was the extension to the farmhouse as a self contained 'Dower house', no doubt for the ageing couple, Ambrose and Anne. Although self-contained, the extension had direct access to the main house through the parlour at ground level and corridor at upper level.

There were several minor buildings on the site although most of these are only ruins. The exception to this is a range of three enclosed spaces, accessed from the outside, which would have been the privies for the farmstead.

### Discovering the first farmstead

Our own preoccupation with rescuing the main buildings meant that the ruin, which had been closed off for safety reasons, was left for over twenty years until it was decided to remove the huge growth of ivy and investigate the remains of the building. We were grant-assisted in the project by Wicklow County Partnership.

The First Farmstead - revealing the hidden building



**Top, Left:** First farmstead in ruined condition. **Top, Right:** The second farmstead. **Above, left:** The cowshed, a long building, making one side of the farmyard / kitchen garden, now converted to Milking Parlour dwelling. **Above, right:** Ballymurrin in its landscape.

**Below:** Immediate right in picture is the stables facing the farmyard/ kitchen garden. Frontage, pink is the main farmhouse with its 'dower' house. The house is attached to the second farmstead, painted white







**Above, and below:** The condition inside the shell, below, left a massive job, cleaning up centuries of decay, with ivy adding to the serious threat of disintegration.



**Below:**  
The main space in the building was for animals. The openings and walls were carefully pointed with lime as necessary, with repairs to lintels and a gravel base. The dividing wall at the far end separates the space from a cart shed accessed from the gable end. The remnant of a clay and turf wall above the stonework probably went up to the roof.



**Right:**  
the frontage of the first farmstead. Gentle repair to stonework to ensure that the stonework will endure. Doors open to an interior exhibition







**Above,** The jamb of the doorway carries a remnant layer of plaster, outlined, indicating that the the space at this end was inhabited.

A line of brickwork (below the gravel surface) points to a wall or partition division between the residential part and the animal house.

Lintels were in poor condition, needing replacement, although it was possible to save one of the doorway lintels **above left**, reflecting centuries of use, and to make repairs to the other lintel, and the stonework which collapsed, **above right**. Note also the clay pipe fixed into the wall as a channel for ventilation in the animal house.

**Below:** elevation of the first farmstead prior to taking off new growth after removing the ivy. There were several issues to be dealt with; the rounded corner was in danger of collapse as a large portion had fallen out. This was undertaken as an emergency measure before the overall rescue could be done. The stonework was deteriorated in area 2, where a very poorly repair was made some time ago. The doorway in area 3 needed a replacement lintel, shown above, The doorway in area 4 needed only limited repair and the original lintel was retained, see above. Area 5, the rounded corner needed limited repair.







**Left:** After the ivy was removed, the condition of the walls, inside and outside could be ascertained in order to prepare for a thorough repair and pointing of the walls. This was carried out by Eamon Delany, stonemason, who removed all the collapsed stones away from the building, to level the floor of the building and finish with gravel, to repair and replace lintels and to make a level finish inside.



**Left:** the image is a diagrammatic suggestion of how the building could look with a renewed roof and doors, although it is not intended to do more than consolidate the stonework of the building to show the meaningful structure of the walls and the enclosures that they made for family, animals and carts, as a modest version of a farmstead building. It would allow the farming of over 200 acres to be carried out effectively. It was soon after completion that the building was occupied by the first owners, Ambrose and Anne (Eves) Judd, who married in 1667, and produced their first child, Robert, who was born in the house. His birth in 1668 recorded in the Quaker record.

The First Farmstead - revealing the hidden building





**Left:** This is the entrance to the cart shed at the gable of the farmstead. The gable end opening collapsed shortly after we arrived in Ballymurrin. ... The tall pillar is a mystery, possibly a gatepost to the fields above.

**Right:**

The stonework of the building will be secure for some time...until the ivy grows again. This gable end still has the dried out ivy climbers, now used to help wisteria to grow on the gable. The material used in the gable is part poured-and-shuttered concrete, undertaken some fifty years ago. The circled area is one of the clues to the roof: there are a few slates remaining, attached to the eaves, confirming that the roof was slated.



The image, **left**, shows what could be kept from the collapse; in the foreground is one of the timbers which supported the gable seated on the top of the wall.

**Left:**

The cart shed has been used as a barbecue location in the summer...



**Left:** The middle space, with an animal-sized door and a stone water trough which has stayed in place since it was first used... Note the line of bricks in the floor which follow the line of the foundations of the wall below it, with the family accommodation at this end of the building. There is no sign though of a chimney, nor of a mezzanine platform. Perhaps the chimney was constructed in timber and clay as a 'beehive chimney' although no trace is there.



**Above:** A recent picture of the farmstead ruin. The pathway and garden area are recent. The roof overhang is evident here, with projecting thick slate.





This is separate from the first farmstead... It is a complete building divided into three spaces two of them opening from the gable and a third opening on the other side into the area of the garden of the 'dower' house at the end of the farmhouse building. We believe that it was the privies for the farmstead . It was re-roofed in 2012, using additional slates from the roof repair of the stables. They are not in use though...The stonework is in good condition, and there was some evidence of an outlet through the wall, circled. Above the gable door is an opening, for ventilation.