

Ballymurrin Stories -Restoring the Quaker Farmstead  
2 The Old Stables



Milking parlour    Second farmstead (white)    Farmhouse (pink)    Dower house, (added.)    **STABLES**



The Old Stables; Ballymurrin Stories

Ballymurrin  
Quaker  
Farmstead

1668

Over 350 years ago  
Quakers came to  
Ballymurrin

Philip and Delphine Geoghegan,  
owners of Ballymurrin from 1994

## The Old Stables with Tack Room and Loft

The Stables building was built beside the courtyard on its north side with a paddock immediately behind. It is certainly one of the earliest buildings on site, and has withstood the elements, although at a price. When we first examined the building there was little to suggest that it had been in use during the last century, and no indication of repairs except for a concrete outhouse attached to the building, helping to hold it up. This is still in place, with a question mark as to whether to remove it...

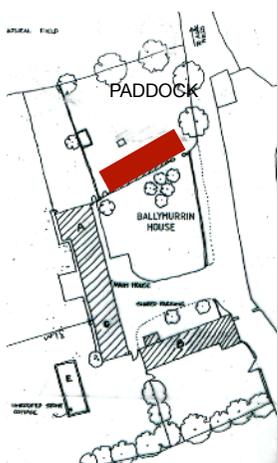
We have made minor improvements, such as putting in a temporary glazed door to the stables and a makeshift one to the tack room. Apart from use for storage little was done, until we had a calamity, when after a period of prolonged snow and rain, the roof succumbed, and folded down into the stables area. Nobody was hurt and there was little damage, but it was not feasible to leave it without losing the whole structure. Our Consulting Engineer, Kavanagh Associates, gave us compelling advice as to how to restore the structural integrity of the building.

The first step was to create a stable structure to allow the roof to be replaced. There were serious cracks in the lower end of the building, where the tack room and loft are situated. The engineer advised that a rigid steel base should be anchored along the top of outside wall, and attached with long steel pins to it. However until that could be done, it was necessary to decide on appropriate action to deal with unstable stonework on the lower gable wall, the corner which was threatened by two large subsidence cracks making the corner unstable and other patches of stonework on the long wall facing into the paddock. It was agreed that only the stonework affected by instability would be replaced.



**Above:** Gable with loft opening above. The major structural crack and the unstable wall beside the loft opening meant that replacement of the roof could be achieved only after the stonework was stabilised.

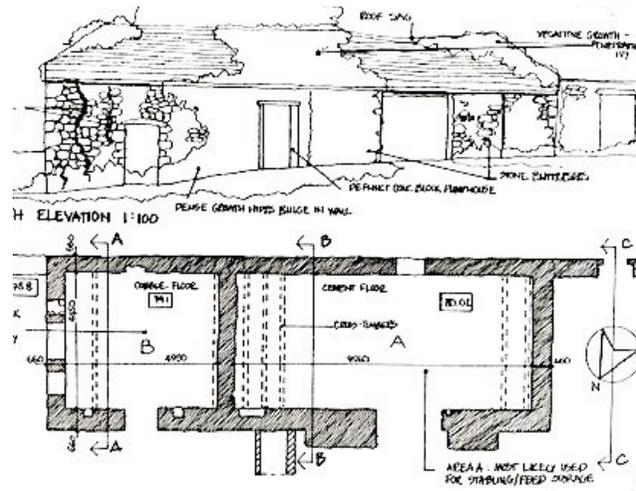
**Below:** interior of stables, with old agricultural implement supports on the wall.



**Left:** Ballymurrin Courtyard layout with Stables coloured red.

### Right:

Drawings made of the Old Stables, submitted for planning permission for residential use in 2006: granted but not undertaken. The upper area is a single space for horses; the lower space is the Tack Room for horses' gear; above, was the loft with a large opening in the gable, and an opening at high level to feed hay into the Stable





**Above:** Stables building: this is the elevation with a single window, facing the courtyard. The collapse of the roof occurred at around the centre of the stables area, deforming much of the roof.

**Below:** The completed and re-slated roof, using second hand slates, with window facing into the courtyard. Guttering was added to the building to channel the water away from the wall.



**Above:** The rear of the building after the collapse. The concrete hut, in front of the building, houses the drilled well water pump.

**Below:** Rear of the building after stonework repair and re-roofing. It is possible to make out the stonework repair, delineated with a dotted line. The ancient lintel above the door was retained,



**Above:** The collapse and debris was inside the entrance for the horses. There are two substantial buttresses on either side of the opening, sloping outwards to hold the wall in place. Not the first event to befall this building!

**Below:** The gable end, with loft above and small windows below. This image shows the extent of reconstruction necessitated prior to replacement to the roof.



## The Old Stables with Tack Room and Loft (continued)



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### Left and below:

Buttressed walls at the entrance to the stables were originally placed to resist the stresses from walls being pushed out by the weight of the roof. Their additional width is clearly shown at both sides of the opening. Whilst they are not in a good state, they have been held together by plants embedded in their joints. Inside the building large beams span across to stabilise the walls



**Left:** a detailed view of the gable, with loft above and the Tack Room below. Careful examination shows how poor the stonework at upper level was. Our stonemason for the job explained how the above area had been repaired with small stones and was not stable. Additionally the stress cracks on the gable and on the long side of the buildings gave notice that further collapse was to be expected. Thus, it was essential to rectify the stonework prior to replacing the roof.



“According to the *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*, an anchor plate specifically is a “wrought-iron clamp, of Flemish origin, on the exterior side of a brick building wall that is connected to the opposite wall by a steel tie-rod to prevent the two walls from spreading apart; these clamps were often in the shape of numerals indicating the year of construction, or letters representing the owners’ initials, or were simply fanciful designs” (from Wikipedia). Although the conditions here in Ballymurrin did not include the exact details of making these steel tie rods, the use of timber beams across the span was seated in the stonework, but passed through to the outside where there was a ‘hook and eye’ solution, tethering the beam to an iron plate with a hole, through which a retaining iron, a peg, passes to complete the effectiveness of the beam. The three examples above are still in place on the building, and are shown as follows:

**Above, left** is on the South facade about half way along. It penetrates through the lime and cement finish, just below the eaves and secures the beam inside.

**Above, centre** is on the North facade, similarly half way along and possibly the other end of the same beam. The beam end is visible behind the tie.

**Above 3** is on the on the South facade close to the entrance to the stables. The timber beam is brought through to the face of the stone wall with a similar iron piece which is attached to the timber. The peg is missing, but was presumably similar to the other two shown.



**Above:** although the lime plaster in the stables has sizeable areas of fragmentation, it will be possible to patch those areas with the skills of an experienced plasterer. Note also the extensive plastered areas in the image, **below right**, after the roof had been replaced.

The unstable beam which was removed has been kept on the floor, close to the wall. The holes left after removal can be seen in the image, **below, left**, with one of the surviving beams (providing a convenient, long term hanging space for an agricultural implement no longer in use). A more recent image, **below, right**, shows the space roofed once more and the opening closed with a glazed door.



**Above:** This image shows the end of one of the two surviving beams in-situ. A third beam was unstable and was taken down. It has been retained in the building. It is close to the gable on the South side. Its purpose was to act as a tie to stabilise and hold the walls from outward pressure of the collar trusses. The beam went through the wall and was tied with an iron anchor fitting. Those fittings, remaining on the building, are shown on the previous page.

Two further beams spanning across the space, are visible in the images, **centre** and **left, below**, at both ends of the stable, are from a different time and located at a higher point on the wall. It would appear that this beam was also introduced relatively recently to limit the pushing out of the wall,

(It is worth noting that the Old Milking Parlour has similar stabilising beams in-situ. They are still keeping the walls in place.)





During the winter of 2009, on the 9th February, the roof collapsed and drew us into a prolonged procedure of how to get the roof back on... with help from Kavanagh Associates, Conservation Engineers.

**Conclusion:** Much of the story of the Stables building has focused on the challenges of rescuing a building from almost certain disappearance. Yet despite the difficulties, there is so much historical content inside and out which can explain in the future the way that people expressed their own values and also the cultural meaning they attached to the buildings they commissioned, lived in, and passed on to next generations. In this case there is a long history of living in Ballymurrin from the 1670s until now. The Quakers created the farmstead and lived in it through generations of the family for over two hundred years, before new owners took on the challenges of making the farm and its lands yield a return. The Stables is one building out of six and has yet to pay its own way as the expected conversion to a dwelling has been postponed for lack of funds. Despite this the building is safe from further deterioration, and we shall search for new ways to keep the building alive and ensure that its remarkable cultural legacy will be appreciated.



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