



Ballymurrin Stories -Restoring the Quaker Farmstead The Second Farmstead

Ballymurrin
Quaker
Farmstead

1668

Over 350 years ago
Quakers came to
Ballymurrin

Philip and Delphine Geoghegan,
owners of Ballymurrin from 1994

Ballymurrin Quaker Farmstead seen from above. The Second Farmstead is the white building attached to the Main Farmhouse. Ground floor included a Coach House, Forge and Old Kitchen; First Floor included two bedrooms and a loft space: one of the bedrooms was absorbed into the loft space with removal of a wall, creating a larger space, used as a studio currently.

We have named this building 'The Second Farmstead' because we think that the first building of the Quakers on site was a smaller farmstead, just above and behind this building. The first building was overwhelmed by ivy for many years. We cleared up the site, keeping the core elements of the structure, sufficient to show convincingly that this would have been the first on site. The restoration project 'discovering the first farmstead' is included in the 'Ballymurrin Stories' series.

General Introduction to the Second Farmstead

1 The Forge. One of the most important interior elements, the ancient beehive chimney, was in reasonable condition although its he Second Farmstead, incorporating the Coach house, the Forge and the Old Kitchen

When we became owners of the farmstead, the Main Farmhouse and its attached dower house were inhabitable, but the Milking Parlour, Coach House, Forge and Old Kitchen, (which made up the second farmstead) as well as the stables, were derelict and neglected.

We prioritised roof replacement of the second farmstead, as an action to stop further deterioration. Over decades of rain ingress, the roof structure, upper floors and some of the main structural elements were damaged. About 75% of the old structure was rescued and, by replacing wall-plates, the roof was completed, substituting comparable-sized structural elements. With a weathertight building we could move forward with rehabilitation.passage through the roof needed repair. Minimal intervention ensured that this astonishing evidence of the farrier's/ blacksmith's workplace, the **Forge**, survived intact, used for shoeing horses, and making essential tools for the farm, such as ploughs, harnesses and yokes. Various hooks and hinges still in the old building were products of the blacksmith.

The **loft** was accessed by ladder in an open hoist area of the Forge and an opening had been made in the kitchen for a ladder leading up to the bedroom. We opened the closed loft opening in the gable and replaced with a window, within the existing original stone opening.

2 The Old Kitchen. We made essential changes to the Old Kitchen, as follows: It was evident that a wide opening between the Kitchen of the earlier building had been closed to separate permanently the older building from the new. We were able to retrieve the earlier opening by removing the stonework, and repairing the lintels above.

We speculate that it was at the time of closing up the fireplace that this room was to be used as a separate space, with a ladder stair opening to the room above. There was also evidence that a lath and plaster ceiling was installed below the floor beams.

Thus it seems likely that a second family had been housed in these modified quarters, after the main farmhouse was completed.

The Bates family, were probable tenants. We believe that William was involved in the construction of the building on site. They are likely to have lived in Ballymurrin between 1670 and 1680. After that time, they emigrated to America to join the Quakers with William Penn in Newton Township in Gloucester County, New Jersey. (The Bates' Family will be included later in the Ballymurrin Stories).

3 Altered windows in the Second Farmstead:

One more change we identified which applies to all of the windows in the 'second farmstead' is that the openings had been enlarged and new windows fitted. The openings were about one third larger than the originals with 4 pane sliding sash windows replaced, (sometime in the mid nineteen twenties, we think). In turn, because of the poor condition of the windows, we repaired, sound-proofed and draught-proofed the windows.

4 The Coach House

The Coach House would have had a change of use...

This end building of the second farmstead was subjected to change, by reducing the opening, which had been constructed with a relieving arch above, still visible in the loft area. The arch above took the weight off the timber beam below it. Despite this there was a change to the opening, reducing right down to 4 feet or 1.2 metres, and indicating that the opening was wide enough for animals but not coaches or carts. This change to the exterior is shown in a comparative pair of frontages, showing likely appearance before and after the change. For a century or more the relieving arch was disturbed when the window adjacent to it was enlarged. The ornamental brickwork above at the eaves showed some distress as the disturbed arch dropped.

There have been several changes to this fine building, yet much is still intact, and the evidence allows us now to imagine those changes, as the farm grew in scale and demand for space.



This photograph was taken, by David Strawbridge, a few years before we arrived at the house, around 1990. The building we call the ‘second farmstead’ is to the left of the Main Farmhouse. The Main Farmhouse has an added Dower House, an extension for the elderly, accessed through the main house. This image shows the original sash windows in place. They were replaced at much the same time as this photo was taken.

The second Farmstead, **above, left**, had suffered from rain damage over several decades. The window openings on the elevation have all been enlarged, each one about one third larger than the original. Evidence of this can be seen on the inside. The large ‘beehive’ chimney in this building is in the forge, a construction of timber frame and woven hazel covered on both sides with clay, about one foot, 30cm, and covered inside with cow dung to deter accumulations of soot. It is difficult to be decisive about age for this building, but likely to be from the 1670s. The first floor incorporates a bedroom, (upper window, right) and a large loft area, originally smaller until the stone dividing wall was demolished, and the floor levelled. The date of this change is written in the concrete - “P.O’S 1935” (Patrick O’Sullivan was the owner at that time). We adapted the upper level as a studio with new Velux roof windows behind and inserted a bathroom for the ground floor bedroom at the far left end. There was a door (located with a white line on the elevation) which was closed off, perhaps when the Main Farmhouse was built.

The ‘Dower House’, for elderly family, occupies the two bays of windows on the right. The symmetrical front and central door has a modern replacement; the original door was solid with a fanlight above, rectangular with five panes. The side door to the kitchen in the main house, centre above, was an addition also of relatively recent times. This photograph shows the original sash windows which were replaced with hardwood using the same subdivision panes but with fixed light and top hung opening on each.

The length of the whole building frontage is about 50 metres.



Looking at the long elevation, with the Main Farmhouse frontage in pink, with a five bay symmetrical window pattern . The sash windows were replaced with outward opening top panes, about 1990, when the Strawbridge family lived here..



Above, Left, Seen through the opening to the adjacent Coach House area, a single beam holds up the structure inside, created from a timber pole structure rising up two stories. The structural wall was filled with woven hazel, clad with clay and coated on the inside, with cow dung, to deter the smoke from settling on the clay structure.

1 The Forge in the Second Farmstead

One of the most important interior elements, the ancient **beehive chimney**, was in good condition although its passage through the roof needed repair. Minimal intervention in the past ensured that this astonishing evidence of the farrier's /blacksmith's workplace, the **Forge**, survived intact.



The loft was accessed by ladder in an open hoist area. The opening now accommodates a stair within the space, **above, right**. The images show an opening within the chimney, which was a bread oven. It was opened into the forge when the opening old kitchen chimney was closed off. Whilst it was not used as an oven in the forge, it would have been useful for handling and placing hot steel, away from the fire. The space outside the chimney and between the wall of the room is likely to have housed a 'great' bellows for the fire. The compacted floor we replaced with a tiled floor with underfloor heating. The joists span across over 5 metres. All were intact and still support the upper floor loft area.



Above: Current condition of the Second Farmstead

Below: Likely appearance of the Second Farmstead in its early life, based on evidence inside, with Coach House doors, smaller windows and original door to the old kitchen.



The Second Farmstead, outside

The image, **left**, shows the current appearance of the second farmstead. We have used the evidence from inside the building to generate an image, giving the likely appearance of the building at the time it was built.

These changes, affecting the elevation, were as follows:

Windows were enlarged at a point in time, perhaps in the mid nineteen-twenties. However another change occurred with the closing of a larger opening to reflect a changing use, for animals. Previously it had a larger opening suitable for a coach house or for agricultural machinery.

The evidence for this from inside is a stone relieving arch, above, spanning about three metres, (ten feet). With support beam just below, which is intact and in place. About half of the opening was built up in stone and adapted with smaller doors to suit its use for animals.

The smaller window beside the animal entry on the current photograph was originally a loading opening for sacks of grain to be lifted to the loft through a floor opening. It had a solid timber hinged door, replaced now with a sash window.

A further change, not visible from outside was the closure of a front door to the dwelling part of the building, the kitchen, which had upstairs access to a bedroom. This door is shown on the image, **left**.

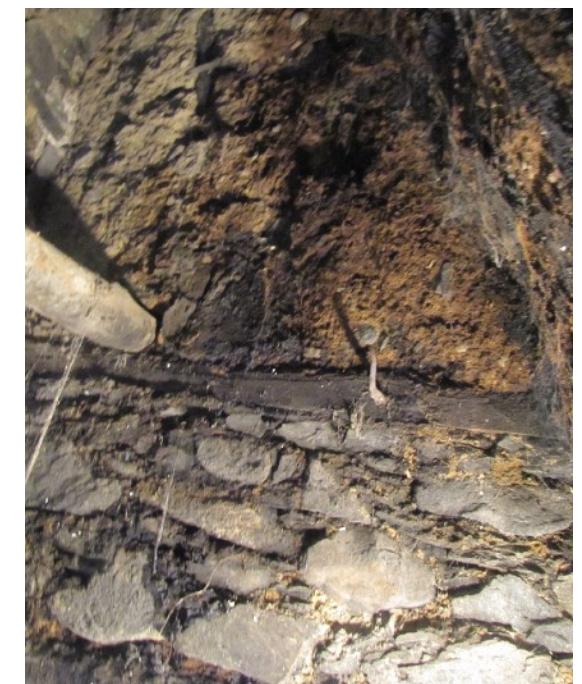
There were many issues relating to the Coach House in making the space usable. The image, **below**, is taken from inside the Coach House space, facing outwards into the farmyard/Courtyard.

In this photograph it is possible to identify the openings; the large door, wide enough for animals to access the space and the small window beside it. Above both, the lintel can be seen to go beyond both openings. The 'blob' at the end is a swallow's nest from the time when they could fly in freely. The line delineated in grey follows the original opening of the wall. The beam above was unusual; it had been a very old roof rafter from another building. The small window replaces a solid door used for bringing sacks into this area, using the same opening. The glass door replaces a double opening solid door. The ceiling had open beams with two hoist openings now covered with timber sheeting. The floor had an original stone flag floor for about half the floor. It was essential to replace the flag floor to allow underfloor heating, with a ceramic tile finish.



Inside the beehive chimney. The stonework is shown **above, left:** one end of the chimney is carried up in stone walling to about 2.5 metres (8 feet). From this base, the structure rises over two floors, and through to the chimney stack on the roof. The back of the chimney, just visible, **top left**, is the rear stone wall, between the forge and the old kitchen. The rear wall is shaped to draw smoke up the chimney at the back. The side and front walls rely on the timber structure for support. The clay and wattle infill is about 30cm (1Foot) thick. It is not possible to see any attachment to the back wall.. This construction appears to be original and unchanged.

The beam, visible in image **upper right**, known as "the randle tree" is built into the walls at each end. It was used to hang, for example, containers of water or cooking over the fire, which were hung on the "rack and hook" shown **above and right**, which allowed the height to be adjusted. These implements were found hanging on the beam





We lived in Ballymurrin for two years before we discovered this extraordinary fireplace. Curiosity drove Delphine to poke her head where there used to be a small opening for a modest fireplace.. Beyond that was a much larger space. Although it had been filled with rubble we were able to identify the beam supporting the opening, hidden behind lime and paint. Careful removal of stones below the massive lintel exposed a large fireplace not viewed for some 200 years. We put in the stove and a new chimney liner, placed a large piece of leftover Liscannor slate under the stove, kept the authentic 200 year old soot on the walls and out of a curious space we retrieved the 'Old Kitchen'.

recovered the original bread oven. The blocked up opening in the side wall of the fireplace is visible, **left**, and from inside the bread oven, **above**, it is possible to see how the closure was made. When the fireplace was closed the bread oven was re-opened in the Forge next door and put into use as a 'cooling' place for hearth-bent iron. In the image **above**, the brick work sealed the opening but the surround of the actual opening was retained. The curious rounded stones, it has been suggested, were placed around the opening to guide the smoke during heating of the oven to curl around, and out of the opening.

2

The Coach House in the Second Farmstead



Left : part of the floor structure showing essential repair. Steel plates were used to clamp together the fractured beam,(left of picture). A 'shoe' was attached to the steel plate to carry the end of the cross beam. The three short timber cross-beams closed the opening, used for a stair or ladder, until it was closed.



The principal beams (**left**) in the room spanned across from dividing wall to dividing wall.



4 The Loft Space in the Second Farmstead, as Studio



Above: This part of the loft space is above the forge, hence the presence the large beehive chimney passing through, against the wall and passing through the roof into a chimney stack. At some stage the clay and wattle surface deteriorated. It has been unchanged to show the structure uncovered. The clay was strengthened with grass which is visible, and the lime covering with horse hair strengthening can be seen in this part and the rest of the room. The Velux roof windows compensate for the small windows at this end of the studio/loft, and now generate strong light in the loft area.



Left: The opposite end of the loft faces due South.

- The whole of the roof had to be replaced, after years of neglect. However it was possible to retain about 30% of the original roof and carefully set the old timbers back on new wall-plates
- The window at the end had been closed up with stonework some time ago. However it was possible to use the intact opening to fit in a window, (4 ft x4 ft) facing South, to bring light into the room along with the Velux roof lights.
- The flooring above the Coach House was severely deteriorated and was replaced with red deal sheeting. Salvaged sheets were re-used as replacements for the area over the Forge



Left: An unusual detail which related only to the loft area: a line of slates bedded in lime plaster surrounds all external walls.

It would appear that the floor had been used for drying barley and other grains. It can be surmised that the slates were acting as a protection from damp in the walls and possibly rodents if the grain was spread on the floor to dry between the walls.



Above: This wall, in the old kitchen, was found with traces of several layers of distemper, a chalk-based paint, mixed with size. There are about eight colours ranging from deep red to pale blue. The surface is easily brushed off, despite which, this example survives. We were advised to protect it, 'by putting a settee against it' which has been successful, so far. Many of the other wall surfaces have not survived. However, when we 'borrowed' an experienced lime plasterer on loan from a Wexford Company, we were able to retain islands of distemper paint by asking the plasterer to 'feather' the plaster around those areas of paint which were still viable. The wall partly shown, **right**, is an example of how successfully the walls were restored, whilst keeping the historic coats of distemper.

