



INTRODUCTION

Ellen Hutchins, who is widely regarded as Ireland's first female botanist, was born in Ballylickey on the shores of Bantry Bay in 1785. This trail will take you to places that were important to Ellen and will allow you to experience the beautiful environment which inspired her to study and record the flowering plants, seaweeds, mosses, liverworts and lichens around Bantry Bay. Her story is told using her letters and the journal of a Welsh botanist who visited her at Ballylickey. This trail provides an introduction to Ellen's story but to find out more and to hear the letters and journal entries voiced, listen to the Audio Guide and visit www.ellenhutchins.com



Specimen of *Fucus esculentus* prepared by Ellen Hutchins
Image courtesy of the Herbarium, Botany Department, Trinity College, Dublin



Ballylickey House birthplace and home of Ellen Hutchins (photo 1910)

BOTANICAL BEGINNINGS

Ellen became ill at school in Dublin and Dr Whitley Stokes, a family friend, took her under his care in his Dublin home. When she was called back to Ballylickey to help look after her mother and a disabled brother, Dr Stokes advised her to take up the study of botany, which would encourage her to spend time outdoors and also give her an interesting indoor occupation: examining, recording and preserving the plants she collected. He introduced Ellen to James Mackay, botanist at Trinity College Dublin, and Mackay sent Ellen's specimens to many of the eminent botanists of the day.

Ellen showed "extraordinary talents and extraordinary industry" in her pursuit of botany and had the advantage of living by Bantry Bay, an area with a magnificent biodiversity and remote enough not to have been explored. Ellen quickly became a valued member of a community of specialist botanists. One in particular, Dawson Turner, in Yarmouth, England, became Ellen's greatest mentor and friend. Although they never met in person, their correspondence led to a deep friendship that developed over a seven-year period. Dawson Turner named one of his daughters Ellen in her honour, and asked her to become the child's Godmother.



Watercolour of *Fucus asparagoides* by Ellen Hutchins, 1811

Image courtesy of the Hutchins family



Bladderwrack *Fucus vesiculosus*

Bantry to Beara: an exploration of Bantry Bay's plants, seaweeds, and landscape through her story
FIRST FEMALE BOTANIST (1785-1815)
FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF IRELAND'S

HERITAGE TRAIL

Ellen Hutchins

WILD ATLANTIC WAY
SLIAN ATLANTAIGH PHILIN

The Ellen Hutchins Heritage Trail provides an opportunity to discover the fascinating story of the short but remarkable life of Ireland's first female botanist, who was born in Ballylickey, Bantry Bay, in 1785.

Follow in Ellen's footsteps, and explore the beautiful area of West Cork that inspired her pioneering work on plants. Visit her birthplace and burial site and experience the unique diversity of places that Bantry Bay offers to the plant hunter, from the shores and islands of the bay to the lush expanse of Glengarriff Woods and the high mountains of the Cork and Kerry border. It is intended that you drive between the trail stops but at each point there are options to walk and explore the area.

An audio guide to the trail is available via www.ellenhutchins.com



Please wear suitable footwear for walking. Check local forecasts and tides.

See plants up close by borrowing a hand lens from Bantry Tourist Office (open April to October).

Identification guides for plants & seaweeds can be bought from Bantry Bookshop.

For information on other activities and sites around Bantry, see www.visitbantry.ie

Visit www.ellenhutchins.com for:

- audio guide to trail
- in depth information on Ellen Hutchins
- links to online plant identification resources
- details of the annual Ellen Hutchins Festival which takes place in and around Bantry during Heritage Week in August.

This trail leaflet, and the accompanying audio guide, were produced in 2017 by the Ellen Hutchins Festival in conjunction with members of the Hutchins family, Bantry Historical Society, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Abartha Heritage.

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THERE ARE NINE STOPS ON THIS TRAIL

Their location and access details are listed below. The grid references given are for use with Ordnance Survey Ireland maps. For Sat Nav coordinates visit www.ellenhutchins.com. Some stops feature historical buildings and walks nearby, others are of botanical interest.

HISTORICAL BUILDING WALKS NEARBY BOTANICAL INTEREST

1 Garryvurcha Graveyard, Bantry

LOCATION: Church Road, Bantry (V982 4850).

ACCESS: Within walking distance of all car parks in Bantry. Open 10am-5pm most days.

2 Blue Hill and Beach, Bantry

LOCATION: 3.5km west of Bantry (V9694 4814) - take the N71 west out of town and after 900m turn right (opposite the West Lodge Hotel). Turn right again after 400m and go to the end of the road. Parking available.

3 Whiddy Island

LOCATION: The ferry to Whiddy Island goes from the Railway Pier, Bantry (V9901 4871). www.whiddyferry.com

4 Ballylickey

LOCATION: Ballylickey is located 6km north of Bantry on the N71.

ACCESS: Parking is available at Manning's Emporium (W0064 5293) or the Ouvane Falls.

5 Snave Beach

LOCATION: Snave is located 8.2km north of Bantry on the N71 (V9961 5434).

ACCESS: Parking is available at the side of the road at Snave Bridge.

6 Coomhola

LOCATION: Coomhola is located 1.7km north of Snave (V9941 5559) – take the right hand turning just after Snave Bridge.

ACCESS: Parking is available near Coomhola Bridge at the trailhead for the Coorycommane Loop Walk: www.irishtrails.ie/Traill/Coorycommane-Loop/864/

7 Priest's Leap

LOCATION: Priest's Leap is located 6km north of Coomhola (V9851 6116).

Follow the sign posts from Coomhola Bridge.

ACCESS: Parking is available in a small layby at the summit of the road.

8 Glengarriff Woods Nature Reserve

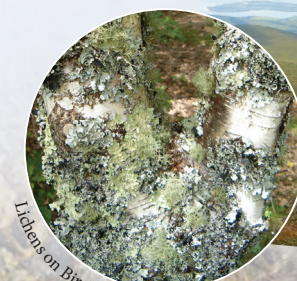
LOCATION: Glengarriff Woods is located 1km north of Glengarriff village on the N71 (V9182 5704).

ACCESS: Car parking and picnic areas are available in the woods. www.glengarriffnaturereserve.ie

9 Hungry Hill and Healy Pass

LOCATION: Adrigole is 18km south west of Glengarriff on the R572 towards Castletownbere. Turn right in Adrigole for the Healy Pass, travel 7km to the highest point (V7866 5357)

ACCESS: Parking is available in a layby overlooking Adrigole Harbour.



Lichens on Birch tree



9 Hungry Hill and Healy Pass



When her health was good, Ellen delighted in “going among the mountains”. We know that she climbed Sugar Loaf and Hungry Hill on the Beara Peninsula and was willing to go to great lengths to find specific plants.

Ellen clearly derived great pleasure from being active, and being useful by finding things for her botanist friends. She wrote to Dawson Turner: “If I can do any thing for you pray tell me. Working for oneself is very dull, but to do any thing for another person gives one spirit to proceed.”

In Ellen’s day, the most common way to travel down the peninsula was by boat as the roads were extremely rough. Either way, getting to Hungry Hill would have been a major expedition for Ellen.

At its summit, Ellen would have found the ancient cairn which is still there to this day. At its eastern side are two lakes, both of which drain into the Mare’s Tail waterfall - the highest waterfall in both Ireland and the UK.

Some of the plants Ellen recorded on Hungry Hill can still be found near the summit today, including Crowberry, Harebell, the arctic-alpine plant Stiff Sedge and cliff-specialist Roseroot. The site is part of Hungry Hill Bog Natural Heritage Area.

For experienced hillwalkers, it’s a tough 6km climb up Hungry Hill from the top of the Healy Pass. The less adventurous can simply enjoy the stunning views from the road.

8 Glengarriff Woods Nature Reserve



Glengarriff Woods is a 300ha nature reserve with several great hiking trails through one of the best examples of oceanic oak woodland in Ireland. The setting of the reserve is spectacular, nestled in a sheltered glen opening out into beautiful Glengarriff Harbour. Above the woods

rise the Caha Mountains, with their dramatic exposed layers of old red sandstone.

The woods were part of the Bantry House estate during Ellen’s time. It was a special place to her and she refers to finding unusual bryophytes in “a very favourite spot by the rocky, woody side of a little waterfall particularly dear to me”. Hutchins’ Hollywort, one of the liverworts named after her, occurs here.

Among the flowering plants Ellen found are some so-called Lusitanian species, unique to south western Ireland and the north western Iberian

Peninsula eg St Patrick’s Cabbage, Kidney Saxifrage and Irish Spurge. As with the mosses, lichens and ferns blanketing the trees, they thrive in West Cork’s mild, damp climate.

One shrub growing in the woods now that was not present during Ellen’s lifetime is *Rhododendron ponticum*. Introduced in the mid to late 1800s, it has become an invasive pest that National Parks & Wildlife Service is working to control on an ongoing basis.

7 Priest’s Leap



The Priest’s Leap is a steep and winding road which passes just below the summit of County Cork’s highest mountain, Knockboy (Cnoc Bui). Lewis Dillwyn who visited Ellen in 1809 wrote: “The prospect from its summit is very grand & extensive. To the southward the smooth and glassy surface of Bantry Bay with its numerous creeks & inlets formed a fine contrast to the dark line of its surrounding mountains, & a large tract of country with the Atlantic Ocean beyond as if spread in a map beneath us.”

Ellen had a great appreciation of beauty, both in the countryside around her and in the plants she collected and viewed through her microscope. She wrote of “treasures” and “exquisite little beauties”.

In the early 1800s, the Priest’s Leap was the main route between Bantry and Kenmare, but it was not an easy journey. Lewis Dillwyn wrote that Ellen’s brother organised sixteen men to carry his carriage over the pass. He chose to get out and walk to hunt for plants.

Ellen recorded several relatively rare plants growing at the summit of Knockboy, which can still be found here today, over 200 years later. They include Dwarf Willow, which at just a few centimetres high is the tiniest tree in Ireland, and Stag’s-Horn Clubmoss, refound recently having not been seen in south west Ireland in over 100 years. This ecologically important site is a Special Area of Conservation named Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog.

For the adventurous, it’s a 6km return trek to the 706m summit of Knockboy (only recommended for serious walkers).

6 Coomhola



Large-flowered Butterwort
Pinguicula grandiflora

Ellen was fortunate to have the lovely Coomhola area nearby. Part of the Beara Way, the Coorycommane Loop Walk provides a wonderful opportunity to follow in Ellen’s footsteps and discover this special place for yourself. The walk starts near Coomhola Bridge and passes through beautiful woodland, before opening out onto heath and blanket bog. The trail returns to the Coomhola Bridge downhill through forestry and along a quiet boreen.

Be sure to look out for Large-flowered Butterwort, one of Ireland’s few insect-eating plants, which Ellen once described as “a most beautiful plant and

great ornament to marshy places in spring”. The plant is typical of West Cork’s wetlands and is only found in south west Ireland and the north western part of the Iberian Peninsula. Also present here are two much less conspicuous insectivorous plants, Pale Butterwort and Round-leaved Sundew.

Along the route, in clear weather, there are fantastic 360° views covering much of the area that Ellen explored. County Cork’s highest mountain, Knockboy, can be seen to the north, Glengarriff and the Caha Mountains to the west and Bantry Bay and Whiddy Island to the south.

Along the closest shoreline, the long stretch of woodland is Ardnagashel Estate, where Ellen’s brothers, Arthur, and later Samuel, established an arboretum. This included a series of exotic trees that came from Kew Gardens, London through Ellen’s botanical connections.

1 Garryvurcha Graveyard, Bantry

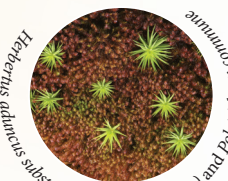


Ellen Hutchins was born in Ballylickey on the shores of Bantry Bay in 1785 and lived there for most of her life. She suffered from bouts of ill health throughout her short life and died just before her thirtieth birthday in February 1815. She is buried here in Garryvurcha Graveyard in an unmarked grave.

A plaque was erected in August 2015, 200 years after her death, during the first Ellen Hutchins Festival. Ellen is described as a natural history pioneer in cryptogamic botany and coastal flora and fauna.

Cryptogamic means the non-flowering plants – seaweeds, lichens, mosses and liverworts. Ellen specialised in these and her work on seaweeds is particularly significant. They were little understood at the time, and her work was indeed pioneering. Fauna is included in the wording because Ellen also studied seashells.

Ellen left a significant legacy to botany, and her name lives on in many species that she found new to science and which were named after her by leading botanists of her day eg Hutchins’ Pincushion (*Ulota hutchinsiae*) and Hutchins’ Hollywort (*Jubula hutchinsiae*). Her beautifully prepared specimens (dried plants on paper), with “Miss Hutchins Bantry Bay” handwritten on them, are held in herbaria (libraries of specimens) across the world, and are still used for identification and research by botanists.



Hedgehog’s sea-pinks: *hutchinsiae* (Gotts.) and *batytrichum* autumn

2 Blue Hill and Beach, Bantry



Ellen found an impressive 1,100 species of flowering plants, mosses, liverworts, lichens and seaweeds around Bantry Bay. The shoreline near Blue Hill is one of the spots she favoured in her search for marine plants, and it also provides wonderful views across most of her plant hunting area.

Blue Hill is a drumlin that was formed thousands of years ago by the movement of glacial ice sheets across the landscape. On the beach, you will see a huge variety of stones of various rock types which were brought here from

many miles away and deposited when the ice sheets melted.

In the upper inter-tidal zone, are seaweeds such as Bladder Wrack and Channelled Wrack, of which Ellen wrote: “It is so common a plant in this country that the shore is as yellow with it as the land is with Furze.” As the tide drops, other seaweeds such as kelp can be seen.

Lichens on the coastal rocks, include the distinctive yellow *Xanthoria parietina*. Flowering plants recorded by Ellen which can be seen in this area today include Bittersweet, Kidney Vetch and the low-growing shrub, Creeping Willow.

For a short stroll, head along the shore parallel to a little-used air strip. This is a popular walk for locals.

3 Whiddy Island



The seashore of Whiddy was where Ellen found many seaweeds new to science. She would head off in a small boat from Ballylickey, sometimes with a young servant girl or boy to help her over the rocks with her boxes and basket. Back at home, Ellen made detailed and accurate watercolour drawings of the seaweeds to show how they looked “when fresh”.

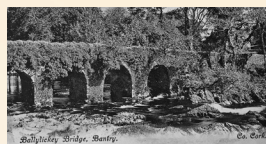
The island’s climate, like other parts of south west Cork, is influenced by the Gulf Stream, creating a unique ecology. When the renowned Welsh seaweed botanist, Lewis Dillwyn visited Ellen

and her family in 1809, he was taken out to Whiddy. He described Bantry Bay as “perhaps the best garden in the world for the marine algae [seaweeds], and they there grow in deep pools secure from the ravages of every storm, and attain an enormous size”.

Fuchsia brings rich colour to the island’s hedgerows, but although now a symbol of West Cork, Ellen did not find it here 200 years ago. This South American species only became a popular hedging plant in later times. Other flowering plants that Ellen recorded on the island include Dwarf Elder, Restharrow and Wild Radish.

There are several way-marked trails on Whiddy, including one to a fortified battery built during Ellen’s lifetime following the failed attempted invasion by Wolfe Tone and the French Armada in 1796.

4 Ballylickey



A plaque on a small gate pillar by the public road near the bridge over the Ouvane River commemorates Ballylickey House as Ellen’s birthplace and home. The Hutchins family lived here for at least four generations until 1921. The house was destroyed by fire in 1976 but was rebuilt to its earlier Georgian proportions. The property remains in private ownership and is not open to the public.

Ellen was the second youngest of twenty-one children, but only six of the children survived to adulthood. Her father died when she was two, and her only sister died two years later, leaving Ellen with a widowed mother and four brothers. By the age of twenty, in 1805, Ellen was home in Ballylickey, caring for her mother who was by now elderly and ill, and helping look after her brother Tom, who had a “paralytic

condition and had lost the use of his limbs”.

In 1805, James Mackay, botanist at Trinity, visited Ellen in Ballylickey and suggested that she look at seaweeds. Ellen was delighted to have found someone who shared her “passion for plants”, and who had asked for her help. She soon sent specimens to him of new discoveries she was making; in seaweeds, mosses and other plants.

We know that Ellen had a glasshouse and loved gardening. Mackay sent her rare plants and seeds for her garden, often with growing instructions.

Ellen’s caring responsibilities were considerable and there were family “troubles” too. Both botany and her immediate surroundings provided solace to her. She wrote of walking out “to enjoy in silence and solitude the delightful softness of the night either by the seashore or by the river. Here I recover my spirits or rather become calm after the agitations of the day.”

5 Snave Beach



A lichen, *Collembola foveolatum* growing on barnacles

Along the coast north-west of Ballylickey sits a little gravel beach where the impressive Coomhola River enters Bantry Bay at Snave Bridge. Ellen collected seaweed and shell specimens along this shore. Ellen is known to have identified at least two new species of shell including the wing shell (*Pteria hirundo*).

In Ellen’s time ‘coral sand’ also called maerl was dredged from Bantry Bay and used as a soil improver. Ellen found many interesting shells mixed in with it. Maerl is actually a type of coralline algae and is still dredged from the bay today.

Snave townland lies between Ballylickey and Ardnagashel. In 1813 Ellen and her mother moved from Ballylickey to an Inn at Bandon, Ellen wrote that this was “for better medical attention” but her cousin, Thomas Taylor wrote that Ellen’s eldest brother had thrown her and her mother out of the house at Ballylickey. Ellen’s two older brothers, Emanuel and Arthur, were for years in disputes with each other over property. These caused Ellen considerable anxiety, heartache and anger.

Ellen spent her final months at Ardnagashel House, along the wooded shore west of Snave Bridge, living with Arthur and his wife Matilda. Ellen moved there after her stay in Bandon, where her mother died. Ellen herself was seriously ill, suffering from a liver complaint which was being treated by her doctor with mercury. Ellen died at Ardnagashel on 9th February 1815.