

Ellen Hutchins & Dawson Turner

Letters: September to December 1811

The original letters are held by the Library and Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London (fifty letters from Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins) and the Wren Library of Trinity College Cambridge (seventy letters from Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner).

The preparation of transcriptions of all the twenty four letters from 1811 is a project of the Ellen Hutchins Festival, Bantry, Ireland. It was undertaken in 2021 by Madeline Hutchins, Co-Director of the Festival, researcher on Ellen, and her great-great-grandniece.

The Festival thanks the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London and the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge for permission to use the transcriptions/letters. See the bottom of this document for a note on the process, personnel and the funding of the transcriptions. Permission to use this material elsewhere needs to be sought from the Ellen Hutchins Festival / Kew / Trinity College Cambridge.

Letter 1

Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins, postmark 16th Sept 1811

You are so kind, my dear Madam, as to express your regret that I have not undertaken to give figures of all the submersed alga, instead of confining myself to the Fuci alone. Alas, it is your partiality towards me that blinds your better judgement. See what I do, judge from that what I should do, were I to attempt more. Two months have already elapsed without a No of my Fuci & a third must do so likewise, though I am already so near that dear FINIS; so that though, as is assuredly the case, I should never be satisfied with publishing figures like those of my friend, Dillwyn, yet there seems by far more reasons than there should be to believe that I should publish none at all, & to use a common proverb among us, half a loaf is better than no bread. Mrs T xxx absence in the country & her previous illness making my home less agreeable than formerly has thrown me more into masculine society, which is the bane of xxxxxx especially to one who like me, is ?elevxx xxxxxxxx four glasses of wine & I must forthwith either give over visiting or abridge my attention to business unless I will consent to relinquish all the sources of my greatest happiness. On this account I cannot but envy your mountainous

situation, though I fear my mind is too much perverted by the luxurious care of a town ever to enjoy retirement as I at one period could have done. I am concerned at the account you give me, both of yourself & Mrs Hutchins. Youth, happily, soon recovers from illness, but we cannot flatter ourselves that such will be the case with age, & for this account, perhaps only for this, I sincerely pity you are living in the country remote from all medical assistance. If my letters, such as they are, can afford you the slightest amusement you shall be sure to receive plenty of them, and never think it necessary to make me any answer in return except a few words now & then to tell me how you are, the debarring us from knowing which would be really painful. Seeing how little botanical news I have nowadays to send you, I heartily wish for your sake I was possessed of the epistolary powers of Cowper, who appears to me in this respect to leave far behind him all his predecessors and to have done an essential service to this country, by proving our equality to the French in a point in which they were always before ad [word missing] had by far the advantage. There is a some [words missing] language peculiarly adapted to subjects of [words missing] with all this & with the exquisite taste and delightful []ing of Madame de Sévigné, I must own she soon [word missing] me, while I could read for ever the simple xxxxx of the good unsophisticated heart & playful fancy of Cowper I love to & honour the man who so constantly refers every good to his Beneficent Creator unlike the French philosophers who seem to think it a shame to mention His name though as often as they took their pen in their hands they could not fail to feel, as I do at this moment, that it was not their mere hands but a power superior to them, & xxxxxxx with them, & of which they have no idea, that enables them to move it.

Mrs T is still in the country enjoying herself in a cessation of care, and recovering her strength. Ellen and my other two youngest are with me. They have just this moment passed through the Bank where I am writing and been holding up their dolls to me with no little triumph. Your little namesake grows & thrives & the nurse would fain persuade me she can already keep her head upright but nurses in these matters are gifted with foresight. I shall rejoice when she first gets teeth, which is a great epoch. It pleases me extremely to find that the reading of the life of Tasso has not disappointed the expectations I had led you to form of it. It is a book I always take up with fresh pleasure not because I hold much interest in the subject but because the reflections of the author appear to me so sound and accurate. The preface in particular I think a piece of very fine writing. Did you ever meet with Linnaeus xxxx written xxxxx xxxx would you be able if you had it to read it? Being all in Latin? I shouldn't ?dare to put this question to you so abruptly were you by my side, but distance must plead my excuse. I hope you will oblige me by answering it, and, I trust in the affirmative as to the latter part; for I know no book

so calculated to afford a mind like yours infinite delight and I will beg to be allowed the gratification of sending it to you forthwith.

I am quite vexed I can nowhere lay my hands upon a morsel of *Hypnum rufescens*. I certainly have aplenty and soon shall find it, but till then I am vexed to say I must keep you waiting. Have you got at present the specimens of *Jungermanniae* from me, and the plates from Mr Hooker? You speak feelingly of poor Tasso's acute sensibility – do you know Warton's Ode, the Suicide? If not, I will send it in a frank – it is short – The two following stanzas from it always were to me singularly touching and beautiful: then in a similar [paper missing] Roscoe's Ode on Burns whose works I am particularly fond of.

"Is this," mistaken Scorn will cry,
"Is this the youth, whose genius high
Could build the genuine rime?
Whose bosom mild the favouring Muse
Had stor'd with all her ample views,
Parent of fairest deeds, and purposes sublime?"

Ah! from the Muse that bosom mild
By treacherous magic was beguil'd,
To strike the deathful blow:
She fill'd his soft ingenuous mind
With many a feeling too refin'd,
And rous'd to livelier pangs his wakeful sense of woe.

See, my dear Madam, with my great alarm I have scarcely left myself room to tell you I should be glad of a snippet of *F. cristatas* & particularly so of a drawing of *F. fruticulosus* in different states for my work. You are to send me too all your *Jungermanniae*.

Thus to go last I am a beggar. It is my ruling passion yet I am not unmindful of your kindness or indeed of your valuing your friend. D. T.

Letter 2

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner, 28th September 1811

I thank you very much, my dear Sir, for your kind & interesting letter. No part of it gave me so much pleasure as that relating to your family. After the length of time that I have experienced your kindness you will feel that I must naturally be interested in the health & happiness of all around you & that it gives me great pleasure to hear that Mrs. Turner is recovering health & spirits to make you all happy & enable you to enjoy each other. When she returns from the country & brings all her girls back to you, I shall expect to hear that you are all as cheerful & contented as such minds as yours deserve to be even in this world. I am glad to hear my little child is getting on so well, though one cannot give credit to the whole of what her Nurse says. I hope I may please myself with believing that she is advancing as fast as she naturally ought to do. If she has but health she will soon hold up her head & look knowing.

I have been so kept employed for some time past with a variety of little affairs that I have not been able to read, draw, or go out to the mountains. Next week I expect to be at liberty & return with great pleasure to those employments that please me most. I shall very soon be able to do the drawing of *Fucus fruticulosus* for you and some others that I wish you to have. I have a *Conferva* very near *F. fruticulosus* but a distinct species. It seems intermediate between this *Fucus* & *Conf. fucoides*, having the habit of the former & the jointed structure of the latter. I have got a large *Rivularia* that I think may be new of which you shall have the specimen & drawing. Some *Conferva* that I have never yet sent you. The other day I met with the lateral fruit of *Conf. elongata* in a very fine state. Do you wish for the specimen? If you have not seen it, I think you would like it. No, my dear Sir, it is not partiality for you that blinds me. I am very sure that you would give fine figures & good descriptions of the plants that Dillwyn has but imperfectly represented, & as the whole of the submersed *Algæ* must be thrown together for a new arrangement, I think it would be a most desirable thing that the whole should be done by one person & particularly by you, who I am firmly persuaded understands more of this tribe than any other person. I am glad you are near the end of the *Fuci*. You seem to wish it so much & beside I am anxious to see the conclusion.

The specimens from Mr. Hooker that you sent to Mr. Mackay have arrived quite safe. The Engravings &c you say that Mr. H. sent by post never came & I now begin to fear they are lost. I should regret them extremely on every account & very much on acct. of the specimen of *Dawsonia polytrichoides*. I beg you will return my best thanks to Mr. Hooker. His specimens of *Jungermannia* are of great value to me. I

have examined them very carefully & compared them with mine. I am greatly pleased to find how rich I am, & how few this one spot wants of the whole of the British species. I suppose with the Engravings Mr. H. sent his opinion of some of the species I lately met with which are quite different from any of [___]. I think I have met with *J. Pubescens* which I had mistaken for a large vary. of *J. furcata*. I have a few others that may be new which I shall in a day or two enclose to you through the Bishop of Norwich. I can hardly think the moss I sent you with the *Pinguicula* can be *Bryum Alpinum*. I must send you more. I have all my *Jungermanniæ* made up to send you & many other things. I would have sent them by Mr. Mackay but could not send them to Dublin in time for him. I shall also send the list of our plants, & of what I want. This I would have done sooner, but that I had not time. The few moments I have had to myself have been spent with poor Tasso. I read his life over & over with fresh gratification. It appears to me very finely written at least I have so little judgement in fine writing that I hardly dare to express an opinion. I can say it pleases my feelings but how far they accord with those of other people I can not say. I live so completely retired & from the habit of keeping my thoughts very much to myself I should hardly venture to speak them. I never think of Tasso but with the highest admiration & regard. Your quotation from Warton's Ode is most beautiful. I had not seen it & should be very glad to see the whole. Burns/Byron* I delight in, I believe most people do. While his poetry delights, his life pains one. I used to think that superior genius was accompanied by superior virtue, but I find it is otherwise & now believe that plain good sense & virtue are more frequently to be found united. I should like to believe that every perfection was added to genius, it would be pleasing to one's feelings to think so, but I believe it would be wrong & unjust to those who are not so exalted. I cannot conclude without saying that my Mother is if any thing rather better since the weather has been cool. I am now strong again. Mrs T. is probably by this time returned from the country. I beg you make our kind wishes acceptable to her & believe me your ever obliged friend.

E. Hutchins

Sept. 28th 1811

*it says Burns, but I think Ellen must mean Byron. Dawson Turner was writing about Burns, but Ellen's comment about lifestyle has to be Byron. In other letters she made similar comments about Byron's lifestyle and wrote about reading Childe Harold.

Letter 3

Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins, 8th October 1811

Black wax. frank by T S Gooch

Yarmouth 8th October 1811

My dear Madam

I was so fortunate as to meet yesterday with the member for Suffolk upon our Bench of Magistrates, at the ?Licarton Sessions, & I gladly availed myself of the opportunity to procure for you the frank, on which I am now writing, & by favour of which I mean to send you Warton's Poem of the Suicide, & a strange sort of translation, or rather low imitation, of one of Horace's most beautiful odes by a partner of mine, written in a vile hobbling measure, which perhaps, he will take measurable care never to write again, but still containing, if I am not misled by partiality, some splendid & most impressive passages. This same partner of mine published a few years ago a short poem, that I should be very glad to have an opportunity of sending you, a translation of Apuleius' story of Cupid and Psyche, so unlike that by your late beautiful countrywoman* that it is impossible to compare them. One of his stanzas, where Psyche led by her curiosity, sees Cupid naked in the bed, appears to me singularly happy & as singularly just; for all preceding authors had represented the god as a mere child, & have painted him so, even tho' he was then married. My friend says

"Not such a young and frolic child,

"As poets feign, or sculptors plan;

"No, no, she sees, with transport wild,

"Eternal beauty veil'd in man."

I had two days ago the pleasure of receiving your letter & hearing by it that my fears respecting your health were all groundless. It made me feel myself the more vexed & ashamed at the querulous style of that which I had just before sent you; but I trust you will pardon me. I hope I shall be able, before this goes, to tell you whether the Conferva you enclosed (your No. 80) is really C. ?fibiata. It is now ?terrible light, so that I cannot examine it, & almost all my days since I had your letter have been taken up with my duty as a Magistrate, which, happily, gives me very little trouble, except just at the times of the Sessions. I have sent Mr Hooker word that you have not yet received his Engravings, & I trust he will make enquiry about them, so as to insure their reaching xxxxx at one time or another. There was in the parcel a copy of a paper on Andrea, & I think, another of Mr Brown's paper on Dawsonia, both which I am very desirous you should have. I need not trespass

upon your liberality for your specimen of the lateral fruit of *Conf. elongata*; for I have it already; but if you would at some future time allow me to ask you for a drawing of it, I should be very much obliged to you. It is a plant that comes so near to *F. subfuscus* that xxxxx cannot possibly be separated into different genera, & I think the fructification of the tribe is as well marked in it as in any other individual. Pray tell me how the Moss which you sent with the *Pinguicula* & which I took for *Bryum alpinum*, differs from that plant. They appear to me to be the same, but I know by long experience that nobody ought to pretend to judge about the Mosses except those who see them actually growing. I am quite pleased that Tasso's *Life* continues to be a favourite with you in your leisure hours. It is greatly so with me, & I entirely agree with you in opinion as to the good style of the book, & of soundness & depth of the remarks it abounds with. Surely you cannot but be enamoured with Italian poetry. I send you *Hypnum rufescens*, & morsels of the only 3 British *Lepraria* that are likely to be new to you, or desiderata in your collection. I think all the others are sufficiently common & well known. You must not be surprised if this genus should actually be finished printing before next I write to you; for Mr Borrer & I are much disposed to publish the little we have done preferring that even a Mouse should be the fruit of our labours, rather than they should be absolutely abortive. Mr Hooker has just sent me a most interesting account of the past winter in Iceland, which was severe there beyond what ever was known, & such quantities of ice were driven to the coast that even during the whole of this summer the natives of the shores have not been able to see the sea, except in particular [paper missing] the ship from which he got the intelligence xxxxx, two new volcanoes had just broken out, & were xxxing up fire, smoke & ashes to a considerable height xxx towed the/their vessel continued in sight. Did I ever tell you that Mr Konig* spent this summer in Guernsey and Jersey in the search of rare Minerals & plants, in which he was sadly disappointed, but he gave me a curious piece of information that *Teucrium scorodonia* is the most abundant of their vegetables & is constantly used in making their beer instead of hops, & Mr Konig says the beverage is excellent. My family, including Little Ellen, are now all quite well. Mrs Turner desires her best respects to you, & the family at Ballylickey. I always am, my dear Madam, your much obliged friend D Turner.

* Mary Tighe (1772-1810) *Psyche, or the Legend of Love* re-published in 1811 by Longman, London

* Charles Konig (1774 - 1851) a German naturalist who in 1811 was assistant keeper of the department of natural history at the British Museum.

Letter 4

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner, 16th October 1811

My dear Sir

I have the pleasure to tell you that yesterday Mrs. Townsend sent me Mr. Hooker's parcel of engravings & ca I had quite given them up as lost. She had them a considerable length of time in the country before she sent them. I am quite delighted with their beauty & accuracy & much pleased to find by Mr. Hooker's letter that he will publish them. Pray thank him for me I will trouble you with a letter for him in answer to his in a few days when my cold gets better, and send him a few specimens that he wishes for of new Species. What a very curious Moss the Dawsonia is I am quite happy to have got it safe. Mr. Brown was so obliging as to send the paper describing it & also a specimen of a beautiful Lichen *Bæomyces seteporus*. Let me thank you for your last letter & your good account of little Ellen, very small delicate children do often get on surprisingly well, & I am very well inclined to persuade myself she is one of those & that I may yet see her a healthy girl. I am glad to find Mrs. Turner is gaining strength & hope she will be fully recovered before winter. She has the advantage of agreeable society to amuse her mind & support her spirits. You seem to have valuable & agreeable people always at your house. Mr. Mathias must be a delightful man. I have often heard of him, though a man may have much celebrity in London & his name be unknown in this obscure corner of the world. However we begin to hear more & be more known than we were a very few years ago, thanks to the French since they visited as Military people & other strangers have got into the country. Before that time you could hardly imagine any thing more retired than this country or more completely shut out from all knowledge of what was passing any where else. Thank you for all you say respecting the Lichenographia. The Lists you shall have in a very short time, as soon as I get well enough to write them. My only reason for delaying that of our plants was that it may be as perfect as possible. Many of the new *Confervæ* & *Rivulariæ* are not named, some mosses & a few Lichens. What can I do respecting them? Shall I put their Nos. in the list & will you give them names? This will be putting you to some trouble at the present, & perhaps be inconvenient to publish the names of undescribed species. Before I hope you have got the specimens of *Gyrophora pustulata* safe. I sent them the day after I got your letter. I hope you will go to the wonderful man who teaches the art of memory though I feel you have no want of his art where I am concerned. I think every person ought to go to him, except the Gentleman at Cambridge whose astonishing memory Mr. Mathias told you of. I do not think his demand for each lesson was extravagant, if he can do what is said. Who would not pay any sum for the acquirement or great improvement of memory. Has nature nothing to do in

this business? Can it be possible that a stupid person can learn to do by his art the same that an intelligent person can, with the same assistance? I hope Sir T. Gage can give you information. He had excellent opportunity in Ireland of collecting & observing Lichens & I believe did find many new species. I wish he would give you good specimens. I have some to send you which you shall have as soon as Mr. Mackay comes to Dublin. My Mother is but poorly, very weak & nervous. She is always glad to hear how you & Mrs. Turner are. With kind regards for you all, your faithful friend.

E.H.

Octr 16th 1811

Letter 5

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner, 11th November 1811

My dear Sir

You have no doubt been expecting to hear from me & perhaps my silence has as at other times given you uneasiness. This idea has made me feel uncomfortable, & I now take the first opportunity to relieve us both. Since I wrote last my Mother has been very ill & in attending her I caught a severe cold which has confined me & prevented my doing any thing until this day. I have at length answered Mr ?Brown's letter & beg you to [] the enclosed []. I got your letter, [] the poems & specimens quite safe & thank you for them. They gave me pleasure. I was very glad to hear you were all well, & my little Ellen advancing. How I should like to see her. The list of our plants is begun & now that we are all so much better shall be very soon finished & sent to you with a parcel of specimens & some drawings. I have more to finish that I wish you to have. How do the Lichens get on? I suppose you & Mr Borrer all very busy. I long to know how all are this gloomy [weather?], but perhaps you have fine days while we have nothing but rain in the mountains.

The drawing of Conf. elongata you shall have with the other things.

Yours ever

E.H.

Nov[embe]r 11th [? 4th] 1811

Letter 6

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner, 29th November 1811

My dear Sir

I was quite surprised to see a letter from you & should have felt not less happy when it was opened but for the wretched ?bile that torments my friends as well myself as you say you are not accustomed to it. I hope you may not have it again & that you now feel light & well after it.

I am much better than I have been for some time and return to my old pursuits as far as the constraints on my time to which I am subject will allow me. My mother continues weak and nervous. Her head in a very bad state and her deafness so increased as to make it distressing to speak to her. For her one cannot look forward with any hope of recovery. With her on one side and my brother who has lost the use of his limbs by a paralytic complaint and whose case is equally hopeless on the other, you will not be surprised when I say I have little spirit left to animate me in my pursuit. Nature, I believe made me more serious perhaps more melancholic than gay yet I think but for the sorrows that every hour put upon me I could be as contented as most people seem. Simple amusements & such as are attainable in my situation satisfy me at least as far as I believe it possible to be contented in this world. A book, needlework, the garden, sketching a plant or a mountain ramble all delight me. But whither am I wandering now. My little girl who I employ to assist me when I go out to the rocks has just brought me F. fruticulosus that I sent her for as I wanted a morsel to finish the drawing begun so long ago for you. She knows it by the name of 'dewy kind' & by such names brings me every species I send her out for with the most perfect accuracy. Having taken her out with me constantly she is now well trained & very useful. It is curious to mark the effect that observing plants has had on her wholly uncultivated mind. She is very intelligent & of a very sensible family. When I show her any curious contrivance in a plant its effect is expressed by "the Lord be praised". Nothing can be more impressive than feeling so simply & strongly expressed. In taste she is very unlike other peasant children admiring every thing neat & delicate looking.

I got the sheet of your Lichenographia quite safe. I was highly pleased to find it was really begun. I like the long descriptions. I do not wonder that the work should extend to three volumes, the species are so many. The only species of Variolaria that I have found are Faginea, discoidea & lactea. I don't know what No 141 & 142 are whether species or varieties, I think I have Lepraria ochracea. aeruginosa I have. I think No 124 is a Lepraria perhaps flava. I am sure the Verrucaria No 95 is a very distinct species the crust forms yellowish or rather cream gold patches on the

smooth bark of holly trees. It is very pretty. I can send you plenty of it. I have plenty of Opegrapha obscura which seems to me not an Opegrapha. I can hardly think it belongs to Verrucaria. I am glad you got Gyrophora pustulata safe. No 198 is I think an Urceolaria, a beauty too. I shall attend carefully to your wishes respecting the genus Baemyces & the ?Colcamata both are puzzling particularly the former. I fear it will be very difficult to ascertain which are species & varieties. I have never been able to find Parm. fuciformis or Boccella. I wish much to hear of Mr Mackay's return to Ireland I would then send you a large parcel, many lichens I have for you. I am now able to draw a little every day. Many thanks for your kindness in sending your own Musc. Hib. I shall be very glad to do the leaves in my own [] & see your remarks. I have been of late as attentive to the Jungermanniae as I was able to any thing comparing mine with Mr Hooker's beautiful plates. It will be a sad thing if he will not publish them, how admirable they are! They are so correct they delight me every time I look at them. I enclose you a few rare species with fruit for him, that of J. nigrescens I was more pleased to find than I can tell you. I so little expected it. The fructification assists in distinguishing it from complanata from which Mr H is already satisfied that is distinct. He wished very much for the fruit. I hope he will be glad of that of J. minuta as he said the calyces were rare. You have omitted to give me his opinion of No 46 with fructifications from the under edge of the fronds. It is too precious to enclose another bit in this letter. I am watching its advancement to get perfect fruit & there are but two plants that I have ever seen. No. 43 I can't think J. scalaris, the leaves are very different being bifid they are rather of the shape of J. connivens but from that it ?seems to differ in the simple shoot with leaves tiled on all sides. I have a drawing of Conf. No. 80 to send you. I can't make out if it be the same as ?siliculosa from your specimen it appears to me different. I enclose two others of the same family. I have a fine Rivularia & drawing to send you, perhaps a new one. In the list of our plants I will put Nos. to the new species, pray give them names just as you please, only tell me what they are, that I may name my specimens accordingly. It is quite unnecessary that you should give yourself the trouble of consulting me on the subject. How curious & beautiful the Dawsonia is you may judge that I am highly gratified at knowing it. The paper is a very interesting one. I wish I could find Andrea rivalis here but I don't expect it. How well done it is by Mr Hooker. I am very glad to hear that My Little Ellen is well & advancing. When she can understand you, you must tell her she has another Mama in Ireland. Pray give my kind regards to Mrs Turner & believe me constantly yours

E Hutchins

November 29th 1811

I have never found any species of Calicium. What is the character of your genus Pertusaria?

Have you benefitted much by Sir Thomas Gage's lichens? I hope he has shared his specimens with you. I have got a little of Parm. flavicans. It is very rare. We have but one species of Spiloma tumidula. It is common, I can send you many specimens of the new Arthonia.

Letter 7

Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins 20th or 23rd December 1811

You asked me, my dear Madam, in your last for our generic character of Pertusaria, & I neglected to send it. It is now inxxxxper, so that I am not able; but I am just now in despair about all that regards our Lichenographia, having this morning heard that a copy of Acharius' Lichenographia Universalis is come to England, & is in the possession of Mr Lyell, who is a stranger to me, but I have still written to him to borrow it. This stops [paper and text missing] for the present, & will, I doubt, oblige us to alter much of what is already written: a sad plague, as Mr Borrer & I are now so far from each other.— Accept the kindest wishes from all in this house; that, in true English phraseology, you & all yours may enjoy a merry Christmas & a happy new year.—

Yours my dear Madam

D.T.

23 December 1811

Black wax

No postage marks

Set of 24 Letters from 1811 produced by Madeline Hutchins, for the Ellen Hutchins Festival, December 2011.

Note on the transcription of the letters

The handwriting on the original letters is not easy to read, and some of the letters from Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins have faded ink and holes in the paper. Ellen often used the technique of cross-hatching or overwriting, making these pages particularly challenging to decipher and transcribe.

Michael Mitchell, Professor of Botany at NUI Galway, transcribed forty letters and these were published in his book, *Early Observations on the Flora of Southwest Ireland, Selected Letters of Ellen Hutchins and Dawson Turner, 1807 - 1814*, published in 1999 by the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin. Quotes from many other letters are included in the notes within his book. This was the first time that transcriptions of the correspondence had been made available.

The transcription of ten more of the Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner letters was undertaken in 2015 and 2016 by Madeline Hutchins. At the suggestion of Dr Julia Watson, Professor Emerita in Life Writing at Ohio State University (who 'met' Ellen when researching her own genealogy in Bantry) the Ellen Hutchins Festival applied for and was given funding from the Milwaukee Irish Fest Foundation in 2017 to transcribe the remaining letters. The work was undertaken by Transcription Services Ltd (Isle of Man). The funding ran out with just a handful of letters and a few stray pages left. UCC Library provided a small grant in 2018 to complete the work. In putting the 1811 letters together in 2021, Madeline Hutchins found that one letter and a few pages had been missed and, with help from Adam Green, of the Wren Library, Trinity College Cambridge, almost every word of the 1811 letters has now been deciphered and transcribed.

Michael Mitchell had transcribed nineteen of the Dawson Turner to Ellen Hutchins letters, held at Kew. The transcription of the remaining thirty one letters was undertaken by Madeline Hutchins with help from Dr Anne Secord of the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. The archives team at Kew are kindly tackling a 'Last Words' challenge on a number of remaining problems in the letters from 1811 and we hope that they will be able to complete some of the blanks or 'xxxxxx' in the text.

Madeline Hutchins
December 2021