

Ellen Hutchins Festival Annual Report 2022

President's Medal

In March Madeline Hutchins heard that she had been awarded the Society for the History of Natural History's President's Medal. It recognises an individual or team's contribution and impact in promoting and improving accessibility, inclusivity and diversity to the study of the history of natural history. Madeline gave a presentation to the Society's Zoom AGM in June.

Wet & Wild

Wetlands and Wildflowers: an Introductory guide to the Bantry Bay Area written by Clare Heardman, who also took the stunning photographs, was launched in the West Cork Literary Festival, July 2022 and has been very well received. It was designed by Jenny Dempsey and funded by the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO).

RTÉ Nationwide

The RTÉ Nationwide piece filmed with Anne Cassin in 2021 was aired in the week before the 2022 Festival. This was the Festival's first piece of television coverage.

Festival

The Heritage Council asked the Festival to be in its launch of Heritage Week, and historical re-enactor, Carrie O'Flynn, undertook this for us in costume with baskets of seaweed. Clodagh Finn wrote a wonderful article about Ellen and the Festival for the Irish Examiner. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/arid-40941347.html>

The nine days of Festival events included successful established offerings such as the children's nature art in Bantry House stableyard, Shevaun Doherty's botanical art workshops, as well as variations on previous years, such as Frances Gallagher running the Whiddy Island seaweed event, and the performance / talk - Seaweed & Sealing Wax 2 with Karen Minihan and Finola Finlay, Laura McKenna poet and Shevaun Doherty botanical artist. Dr Astrid Wingler, Professor of Plant Biology at UCC, Micheline Sheehy Skeffington and Roy Hodd were among the botanists who led walking talks.

Archives Cabinet

The archives display cabinet, commissioned in 2021 with funding from the Heritage Council, was unveiled on the eve of the Festival by Noel O'Mahony, recently retired Senior Executive Librarian. Its first public appearance was very appropriately in Bantry

Library where the Ellen Hutchins Festival started in 2015, the archives cabinet then moved to its semi-permanent home at ERI / UCC (see below).

Seaweed Pressing Instructions

The free information on the Ellen Hutchins website on botany and botanical / nature art was enhanced by a carefully researched and road-tested sheet of Seaweed Pressing instructions of how to preserve a specimen and create seaweed art. This was written by Frances Gallagher and designed by Jenny Dempsey.

Ellen's Letters

Madeline Hutchins, with help from the archivist at the Wren Library Cambridge, made progress with deciphering tricky bits in Ellen's letters. The materials publicly available on Ellen's story were increased by more On This Day posts featuring the text of letters written 210 years ago, with explanatory notes. The text of all the letters between Ellen and Dawson Turner in 1811 and 1812 are now online as a research resource.

Ellen Hutchins Building and Reading Room

The Festival has contributed to other initiatives about Ellen Hutchins. The most significant being the naming by UCC of the Environmental Research Institute's headquarters building in Lee Road, Cork City as the Ellen Hutchins Building. This took place in September 2022 with the President of UCC, John O'Halloran, and attracted considerable press coverage. UCC commissioned a poem from Laura McKenna and website materials including a short film.

The building contains an Ellen Hutchins reading room with books on botany as well as archives and items that tell Ellen's story. There are framed specimens of seaweed, a screen with short films, a display about letter writing and a wall panel about Ellen. The Ellen Hutchins Archives Cabinet contains a selection of Ellen's letters about her botanising, books related to her botany, and a watercolour drawing of hers. Access can be given to anyone researching Ellen and there are Open House sessions – the first on Saturday 11th February 2023 to mark International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

The Festival is delighted with the partnership with the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) which will continue down the years.

RTÉ Brainstorm

This online platform has an article by Dr Paul Bolger, manager of the ERI and Madeline Hutchins that maps Ellen's qualities and character against a study of the core values for scientific researchers, written to coincide with the naming of the Ellen Hutchins Building.

Ellen as inspiration

Festival team members have assisted writers, poets and an artist with their research on Ellen Hutchins and the botany of Bantry Bay and Beara. Results of this include a chapter in the book *Where the Wildflowers Grow* by Lief Bersweden and the painting by Cork artist, Oonagh Hurley of Ellen Hutchins exhibited in *Women Unremembered* at LHQ, County Hall, Cork, then purchased by UCC and now in the Ellen Hutchins building.

Ellen also appeared as a vologram and made it onto Sky News.

<https://news.sky.com/story/holograms-of-yesterdays-scientists-used-to-inspire-tomorrows-female-tech-stars-12575029>

Botany and Gardens in Early Modern Ireland

Madeline Hutchins contributed a chapter on Ellen to the Four Courts Press book *Botany and Gardens in Early Modern Ireland* (publ. December 2022) and an article for Gloss magazine (for February 2023). These were based on a talk given at a Worth Library conference in 2018.

Crawford Art Gallery

Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, purchased a watercolour painting by Shevaun Doherty for the National Collection. Shevaun is the Festival's 'resident artist' and the painting is of a seaweed specimen collected by Ellen on Whiddy Island in 1805. Shevaun was given access to the Herbarium in the Botany department of Trinity College Dublin in 2017 to paint it. The painting and its back story are currently in the exhibition, *Behind the Scenes*, until 10th April.

Podcast: Seaweed & Sealing Wax 2

9th February 2023, the anniversary of Ellen's death sees the release of *Seaweed & Sealing Wax 2* as a podcast / audio recording. This features the correspondence from 1812 read by Karen Minihan, with introductions and notes by Finola Finlay, and is enriched by Laura McKenna's poems inspired by the letters. The launch is at an Ellen Hutchins Anniversary Event at the Ellen Hutchins Building, ERI, UCC in Cork City.

Funders

The Festival is grateful to the following for funding given this year: Cork County Council for an arts grant, amenity grant and heritage grant; ERI / UCC; a generous anonymous donor; and Bantry Credit Union.

Madeline Hutchins

An organiser of the Ellen Hutchins Festival
9th February 2023