Captain Kenneth Graham Sutherland

1902 – 1948 - `@I242350671248@` - Harbour Master of British Guiana Will Hancock's great-uncle; Ella Wynne's elder brother

> *Drafted 13 August 2026 from the Dharmavault genealogy spine. Confidence marked throughout: **[R]** record-evidenced, **[P]** plausible / inferred, **[?]** not established, **[T]** testimony of Elizabeth Hancock, his niece, 15–16 August 2026. A note on the name: the tree carried him from an index as "Keneth". Three separate records spell him **KENNETH**, and the fuller form is used here.*

The short account

He went to sea at fourteen in the middle of the First World War, had a master mariner's certificate at twenty, and by thirty was carrying molasses across the Caribbean. He made his life in a colony three thousand miles from Liverpool, married there, was mined out of his own ship in wartime, and ended as the man in charge of the port of Georgetown. He died on leave in England at forty-five, **of cancer** [T], of an illness almost nobody knew he had, and a Chamber of Commerce on another continent stood in silence for two minutes. Until August 2026 this family record held him in four bare lines.

Liverpool

Born 27 December 1902 at Liverpool [R] — though one of his own obituaries says **Wallasey, Cheshire**, and the two face each other across the Mersey; the family lived on both sides. The disagreement is recorded rather than smoothed. **Baptised 18 February 1903, Liverpool [R].**

Son of **Captain Edward William Rose Jasper Sutherland**, master mariner, and **Annie, née Sheen** — a maiden name his obituary states flatly in print, one of four independent witnesses to it. Educated at the **Liverpool Collegiate School [R]**.

> *One obituary describes "a Scottish father, also a sea Captain". That is a Victorian inference from the surname and it is **wrong** — his father was born in India to a Cornish family. **[R, contradicted]***

Going to sea

He went to sea at fourteen, during the 1914–18 war [R] — so about 1917, in the worst years of the U-boat campaign, in the merchant service.

Master's or mate's certificate, Liverpool, 19 May 1922, aged twenty **[R]**; Board of Trade Master Mariner's certificate in due course, *"following his father's footsteps"*, as the obituary headed **IN FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS** put it.

1926: on the electoral register at 31 Plattsville Road, Liverpool [R] — a mile from the family's 1911 address, and the same house (or its neighbour) his father would later buy with £400 borrowed from Ella.

British Guiana

He came to the colony in 1933 [R], working ships that carried molasses to Trinidad. He joined the **Athel Line** — the tanker fleet of the United Molasses Company — and became master of the **ATHELRILL**, and later the **ATHELBRAE [R]**. His shore employer was **The Pure Cane Molasses Company (British West Indies) Limited, 10–11 Lombard Street, Georgetown**, on whose letterhead his one surviving letter is written. **[R]**

Married in British Guiana in 1935 [R] to **Barbara Smart-Dalgleish**, daughter of the late **John David Smart Dalgleish** — a Georgetown chemist who died in 1920 — and Mrs Smart-Dalgleish of **Nottingham House, Main Street, Georgetown**.

Of the war the obituary says he spent *"many busy days dodging submarine attacks, rescuing ship-wrecked sailors in the Caribbean and ferrying supplies between British Guiana and the West Indies"*. **In 1942 the Athelbrae was mined off Trinidad** while bringing a cargo of oil; he survived, slightly injured, and was laid up a few weeks. **[R]**

He held the **General Service and Merchant Service War Medals [R]**.

The appointments

Date	Post
15 December 1942	**Harbour Master, British Guiana** (after acting for some time)
1943	**Port Control Officer** (Competent Authority)
1946	**Marine Superintendent**

Also **Secretary Trustee of the Georgetown Mariners' Club** and **Navigation Officer for sections of the Demerara and Essequibo Rivers**. **[R]**

The letter to his sister, October 1939

Seven weeks into the war he wrote four sides to Ella in England — **the only letter from him to her in this archive**, and one of only two documents anywhere in his hand. His wife Barbara added her own letter on the last page. It was catalogued until 13 August 2026 as *Barbara's* letter with a note from Ken; reading the photographs in full showed the authorship was the other way round.

Its subject is his sister's household. Charles Wynne had enlisted, his firm had done nothing for him, and Ken had decided to act:

> *"I must say I consider that Chas's firm are wealthy enough to have done something for him, a real case of the willing horse. Barbara & I have talked things over and would like you to accept a pound a week from us, while things remain like this."* ***[R]***

He is careful about all of it. He anticipates her pride — *"I know you will not like to do this as you have your own money"* — and he is careful of Charles's position too, noting that a private's shilling a day is *"just fag money & none for beer, which would never do"*, and weighing whether help might *"stand in his way for a commission"*. He explains why they can afford it: *"while we have no home of our own, we are saving quite a lot."* Then he stops arguing and **encloses a cheque for the first ten weeks**.

It also names his ship, three years before any other evidence in this archive puts him on her:

> *"I have not heard from my owners yet & as somebody must be out here, as long as there is something for the "**Brae**" to do suppose I shall be kept here, though I was due home on holiday early next year."* ***[R]***

The *Athelbrae* — the ship that would be mined under him off Trinidad in 1942 — and a home leave, due early in 1940, that the war presumably took.

His father's death, 1942

His father died at Wavertree on 11 April 1942. Ken could not come — the Atlantic crossing was then at its most dangerous, and he was running a wartime port. He wrote instead, in his own hand, to his stepmother:

> *"Dear Emmy — By the time you receive this, the event will be long past. I am very sorry that I was not able to be with you at such a time. You have been ever present in my thoughts & have my deepest sympathy in our hard loss. We shall never forget the kindness that you brought into the last years of my Father's life & feel deeply grateful for it… Love, Ken."* ***[R]***

It is the only document in his own hand in this archive, and it is a decent one. It also settled, from a direction the legal papers never could, who Emmie Kilner was to that family.

Death

He left British Guiana on **14 February 1948** for six months' leave in England, with his wife and their son **Donald, aged five** — who would himself be dead within about five years, of leukaemia, in Guyana [T]. Ken **died at Wallasey Hospital early on 8 June 1948, aged 45 [R]**, and was **buried at Holy Trinity, Wavertree, on 10 June 1948 [R]** — the same churchyard as his father six years before.

The news went back to Georgetown by cable. The City Chamber of Commerce stood two minutes in silence; its president, the Hon. W. J. Raatgever, said the news

> *"came as a great shock to the community as most of them did not know of his illness."*

It was cancer. [T] *"It says about Kenneth, he died on leave in England at 45 of an illness. It was cancer, so I changed illness to cancer."* — **Elizabeth Hancock, voice note, 16 August 2026.** She was eleven when he died and is the last person living who knew him. No document in this archive states it, and the death certificate would corroborate it.

The obituaries name the family he left: his wife; **"a son"**; **"a sister, Mrs. Wynne of Cheshire, England, and a brother Mr. Rollo Sutherland, Canada."**

Loose ends

1. [done] RESOLVED, 16 August 2026 — the daughter, and what became of her. This tree records two children — **Barbara, b. abt 1937**, and **Donald, b. abt 1943**. Every 1948 cutting mentions only the son. **Elizabeth Hancock supplied the answer in a voice note [T]:**

> *"The first entry is a daughter who is in the tree but not in the obituaries. That was **Barbara Jean**. I think she was born in 1937 — she was a year, it may have been 1936 or 1937. She **died when she was about 12** of an unusual disorder. **She was born with the fontanelle in her head closed.** I think there was **surgery in New York**, but she died anyway."*

So there was a girl, she is the *"little B.G."* and *"the Babe"* of the 1939 letter, and **her name was Barbara Jean** — not Barbara June, as this archive briefly recorded it from a machine transcript. She was born about 1936–37 and **died about 1948–49, aged around twelve**.

The condition she describes is craniosynostosis — premature fusion of the skull sutures, so that the fontanelle closes before the brain has finished growing. It is consistent with surgery being sought abroad in the 1940s, when the operation was pioneering and performed at very few centres.

Why the obituaries omit her is now explicable rather than mysterious. Ken died on 8 June 1948. If Barbara Jean was still alive but gravely ill, or had died shortly before, a Georgetown paper listing the survivors would name the son and pass over the daughter. **The exact order of the two deaths is not established and matters** — it decides whether Ken buried his daughter or she survived him. **[T] — first-hand from his niece; no document seen.**

Next: a GRO death registration for a Barbara Jean Sutherland, England, c.1948–50, aged about 12, would fix the date and the cause in one certificate. Her birth registration would fix 1936 against 1937.

1b. [done] AND THE SON DIED TOO — so the line ended entirely. This archive carried **Donald, b. abt 1943**, flagged as *possibly living* and expected to be in his eighties. **He is not.**

> *"Where it says Donald Sutherland, born 1943 in Guyana, would be in his 80s — he died aged about ten, I think, in Guyana. He died of leukaemia." — **Elizabeth Hancock, voice note, 16 August 2026. [T]***

Read the two notes together and this stops being a genealogical detail. Kenneth Sutherland had two children. **Barbara Jean died at about twelve**, of a skull disorder, after surgery in New York. **Donald died at about ten**, of leukaemia, in Guyana. Ken himself died at forty-five in June 1948. **Barbara Smart-Dalgleish was widowed at about thirty-five and then buried both her children.** Whatever she did afterwards — and the archive holds a claim that she became a senior government official in Guyana — she did it having lost her entire immediate family within a few years.

This closes the line. Kenneth Graham Sutherland has no descendants. The standing hope that Donald, or his children, might be traceable is finished.

Consequences for the record, both actioned 16 August 2026:

- **Donald must come off** `LIVING_XREFS`**.** He was flagged precautionary as possibly living; he died about 1953.
- **A death should be added to the tree** once a registration is found — Guyana (then British Guiana), c.1953. **Registrations there are not held in England**, so this is a General Register Office of Guyana enquiry, not a GRO one.

[T] — first-hand from his cousin; no document seen. She hedges the age ('about ten, I think') and that hedge is kept.

2. The Nicholson cousin — and the family's own name. One obituary states he was *"a cousin of Mr. E. S. Nicholson, a retired planter and resident of Berbice, who was the grandson of the famous John Nicholson of the Indian Mutiny."*

Elizabeth Hancock, voice note, 16 August 2026 [T]:

> *"This is so interesting… that **Uncle Otho was one of the Nickels**, because I didn't realise that, and that **Mr E. S. Nicholson was the grandson of the famous John Nicholson of the Indian Mutiny**. I don't know whether we were pleased about that, but **the family's Cornish name is Nickels, not Nicholson** — that's really interesting."*

Two things in that, and they should not be run together.

(a) She accepts the Nicholson connection, and places **Otho** inside the Cornish family rather than outside it — which matters, because Otho Nicholson gave Ella away in 1933 and the archive had never established how he was kin.

(b) She gives the Cornish name as NICKELS. !! *This archive has been writing it **NICHOLLS**, on record evidence — the 1867 marriage at St Columb Major names **John Nicholls Esq. of Trekenning**. Her **Nickels** is a third form. Cornish surnames genuinely varied between Nicholls, Nickells, Nickels and Nicholas within one family and one generation, so both can be right; but **the spelling in the registers is what the record must follow**, with hers noted alongside. **Search all four forms.***

John Nicholson of the Indian Mutiny (1821–1857) is a real and very well documented figure, so the claimed descent through his grandson E. S. Nicholson of Berbice is checkable. **[?] on the kinship; [T] on Elizabeth's placing of Otho.**