Otho Francis McMahon Nicholson

About 1869 – January 1937 · `@I900000060@` · Master mariner; the man who gave Ella away

> *Written 23 September 2026 from the tree record, the letter of 8 June 1933, the Sea Breezes obituary, the email of Cicely Watson (Calgary, 21 August 2023), and Will Hancock's testimony of 13 August 2026. Confidence is marked as in the other accounts: **[R]** record-evidenced, **[P]** plausible / inferred, **[T]** testimony, **[?]** not established.*

The short account

Until 2 August 2026 this archive knew him only as a signature. A letter to Ella Sutherland, written four days before her wedding in June 1933, is signed *"Your affectionate 'Nancy' & Otho"*, and its writer says he is *"looking forward to the duty which devolves on me on Monday"*. He gave her away. Her father, Captain Edward Sutherland, was alive and about sixty-two; why an uncle stood in has never been explained. **[R]** for the letter, **[?]** for the reason.

The name was uncommon enough to be found. He is **Otho Francis McMahon Nicholson**, born about 1869 at **Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island**, son of Henry Donaldson Nicholson and Anna Maria Louisa McMahon. **[R]** He was a child of two in the 1871 Scottish census, at 15 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh. He married **Florencia Madeline Corea Pereira** at Mere, Wiltshire, on 15 August 1902, aged thirty-three. **[R]** He died at Plymouth in January 1937, aged sixty-eight. **[R]** The wedding of June 1933 was among the last things he did for this family.

How he was family

He was Ella's cousin, of the generation above, through **Eleanor Maria Sutherland**, a daughter of Major Edward Sutherland and Catherine Ann Hales. Eleanor Maria married a McMahon; their daughter Anna Maria Louisa McMahon became the second wife of Henry Donaldson Nicholson; and Otho was their son. **[P]** This descent comes from Cicely Watson of Calgary, who wrote to Elizabeth on 21 August 2023 from her own family's records, tracing her line back through the same people, and who identified Otho without ever having seen the 1933 letter. She says it herself twice over that her account may have names wrong; but several of its names are corroborated by records found independently, and it is the only source that explains who Otho was.

"Nancy", who signs with him in quotation marks, is not identified. His wife was Florencia; a pet name is the likeliest reading. **[?]**

A sea captain, like her father

"Otho was the captain of several ships and hence, his travels," Cicely Watson writes. **[T]** He and Ella's father were master mariners of the same generation, which is presumably why he was close to this household rather than a distant cousin.

The family's copy of *Sea Breezes* carries what is almost certainly his obituary, and it is signed by Ella's father. *"Otto Nicholson"* is mourned in Edward Sutherland's own words: *"a man of rare gifts, a cultured introspective mind, and one who ever gave of his very best — in service or friendship … We shall miss Otto Nicholson."* The notice gives his whole sea career: Sandbach's; second mate of the *Cape York*; the Clan Line; Houston's Line; the Pacific house flag. Good Friday 1937 fell on 26 March, which fits a January death and a monthly magazine. **P]** The identification of Otto with Otho rests on the name, the date, the family's holding of the cutting, and the writer; it is not yet proved by a record. The transcription is in [`../documents/sea_breezes_transcriptions.md`.

The letter of 8 June 1933

Written from 298 Utting Avenue East, West Derby, Liverpool 11, on the Thursday before the wedding:

> *My dear Niece, Ella,*

> *These few lines — on behalf of all the "Wicks" [reading uncertain] — to wish you & Charlie a full measure of Happiness & Prosperity throughout your married life.*
>
> *I am looking forward to the duty which devolves on me on Monday, I [attend?] with mixed feelings: naturally, that one likes — one does not like to give away, and I'd sooner it has to be done, and I'll endeavour to do my part in a satisfactory manner.*
>
> *Please accept the enclosure with our united love, and — — God Bless you!*
>
> *Your affectionate "Nancy" & Otho*

The Monday following was **12 June 1933**, which is the best date the archive has for the wedding; the tree's "April 1933" is only the quarter of the registration index. **[P]**

What the family says

> *"Otho gave her away." — Will Hancock, 13 August 2026*

Stated flatly, as family knowledge, in the same breath as Ella's death. It is not independent of the letter, which Will has read; what it adds is that the family reads the letter the same way. With Cicely Watson's identification it took the claim `uncle-gave-ella-away` from *plausible* to *corroborated*. **T]** The testimony is in [`../documents/testimony_2026_ella_death_1995_and_otho.md`.

Open

- **Why not her father?** Illness, absence at sea, or preference: nothing says. Question D1 in the interview briefs, still unasked. **[?]**
- **The marriage certificate** (Wynne × Sutherland, Liverpool, June quarter 1933, vol. 8b p. 14) would put his signature on the register as a witness and settle the day.
- **"Nancy."** Who she was. **[?]**
- **The other Nicholsons.** The family papers also hold a silver-wedding cutting for the Rev. H. J. B. Nicholson and Laura Ann Beauchant (married 1880), and Kenneth Sutherland's 1948 obituary calls him *"a cousin of Mr. E. S. Nicholson"* of Berbice. Whether either connects to Otho's Nicholsons is not established. **[?]**
- **Cicely Watson's own question**, asked in 2023 and so far unanswered: an *Edmund Sutherland Nicholson*, born in Scotland, of whom she has a photograph on a ship.