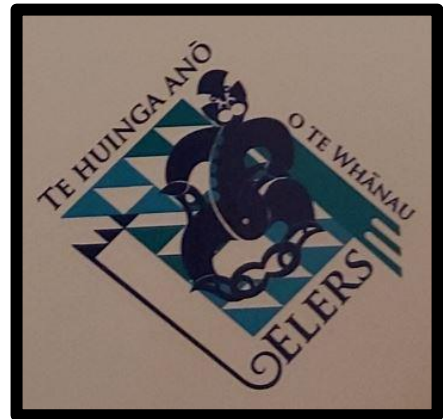




WHENCE WE CAME



Greetings to you all from New Zealand. My name is Tony **ELERS**. I am a very amateur genealogist who during the last two decades has developed an intense desire to know my genealogical roots, then consequently to produce a book for future generations to similarly understand their heritage. My research has resulted in tracing through twenty two generations from myself to King Edward 1 of England via the **ELERS**, **CAREW**, and **COURTENAY** families. The direct connection between the **ELERS** and **CAREW** families was created when Peter **ELERS** (buried in Westminster Abbey in 1753) married Dorothy **CAREW** in 1716, and our link between the **CAREW** and **COURTENAY** families was established by the marriage of Joan **COURTENAY** to Sir Nicholas **CAREW** in 1425.

My relationship with the Cornwall Family History Society occurred only recently. My research led me to two effigies of ancestors Sir Edward **COURTENAY** and Emeline **DAWNEY** in the Church of St Mary The Virgin, Sheviok. The online photo of the effigy is of rather poor quality so I asked Lynne if she had a means of obtaining a better quality photo for me. She obliged and I am grateful for her help in this matter.

During my correspondence with Lynne I happened to mention that there are approximately 1000 descendants here in NZ of Carew Thomas **ELERS** and his wife Meri. I also mentioned that my father, a great grandson of Carew **ELERS** had 20 siblings, a fact that seemed to amaze Lynne.

As a result of that amazement I guess, I was invited to tell our story for your journal's readers. It is therefore my privilege to present our story to you all, thereby linking us Kiwis to the residents of your region.

It is our fervent hope that some of you can provide us with photos and stories of our ancestors from the Cornwall area or for that matter, any other area within the United Kingdom. We have managed to establish active contact with three **ELERS** families in the UK but more would be appreciated.

THE STORY:

Carew Thomas **ELERS** aged 19 years, boarded the Cotopaxi at the port of Plymouth on 17 April 1880, for a voyage to New Zealand via Australia. Both his parents had passed away by the time he was only nine years old so life must have been difficult for him. Carew was born in 1861 in Over Whitacre, Warwickshire to Carew Thomas **ELERS** (1829-1870) and his wife Sarah **FIELD** (1838-1868). Carew snr was a barrister-at-law and was called to the bar by the Hon, Society Of The Middle Temple in 1852.

Whether Carew intended from the outset to bypass Australia and head for NZ is not known, but travelling in the steerage class he certainly eventually landed in Wellington, NZ. Interestingly the name on the passengers' list immediately following that of Carew was a William **BAMFIELD** (a name that appears as **BAMFYLDE** in the **CAREW** family history - Bampfylde Moore **CAREW**). Whether the two were friends is conjecture only, as no mention of William **BAMFIELD** is made in any NZ historical record apart from the passenger list. However there is a version of the passenger list in existence that has a line drawn through Carew's name. One of my deceased Aunties once told me that she had been told that Carew withdrew his name from the passenger list as his travelling companion had not turned up at the vessel. However he turned up "in the nick of time" to board so Carew's name was reinstated on the list. We can only guess whether that companion was William **BAMFIELD**. On the Passenger List document, the Master (Captain Robert **STUDDERT**) signed the statement "I hereby certify that the provisions actually laden on board this ship are sufficient, according to the requirements of the Passengers' Act, for 225 Statute Adults, for a voyage of 90 days". The circumstances surrounding the reason for Carew's departure from England is unclear but there is mention of him in New Zealand historical records as being a Remittance Man.

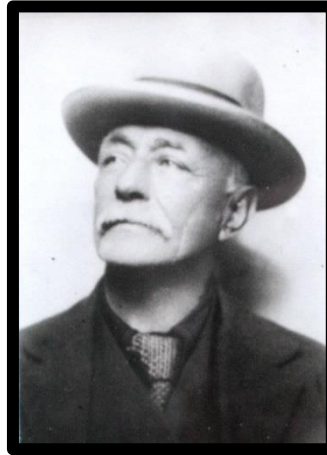
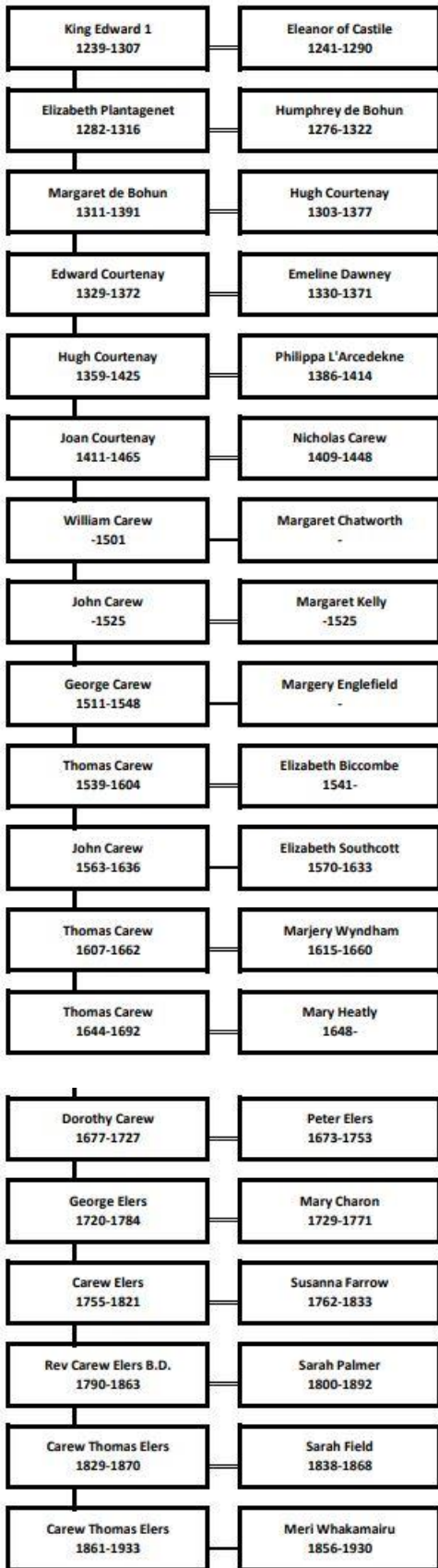
On the 1st of June 1880 after the ship's arrival in the Australian port of Sydney the previous day, the Sydney Morning Herald printed the following report:

The ship is a strong built and well-finished craft, and her voyage throughout gives unmistakable proof that she is able to travel very fast. Captain **STUDDERT** appears to have established himself in the good favour of his passengers, for at Adelaide they presented him with a complimentary address and some plate. The voyage has been accomplished in round numbers within 38 days from Plymouth to Adelaide, within 40 days to Melbourne, and within 43 to Sydney. During the voyage three deaths occurred – a male and a sixteen year old girl died from consumption, and a woman died from erysipelas. The deceased were all buried at sea with the usual ceremony.

Within four days of leaving Plymouth, the Cotopaxi stopped to offer assistance to the steamer Santo which had lost her propellor. On the 8th May the Cotopaxi reached Capetown, South Africa. She then traversed the southern ocean and arrived in Adelaide on 25 May.

It is assumed that Carew disembarked at Sydney, the final Australian port of call. At the time of writing, I have been unable to find any record of him leaving Sydney and arriving in New Zealand. It may be that immigration records into Australia were sufficient for the onward journey to New Zealand. However we do know that by 1881 he had fathered a child in NZ and in 1882 he was married. So his stay in Australia can only be described as a fleeting one.

Before we begin the story of Carew's life in NZ, it may be pertinent at this point to introduce Carew's family lineage from himself back nineteen generations to King Edward 1 of England:



CAREW THOMAS
ELERS



MERI WHAKAMAIRU
ELERS



ELIZABETH
MATANGIHAU ELERS
and ETHEL LOUISA
DONALDSON ELERS

The ability to have available to us the **ELERS** family, this sort of genealogical lineage gives us the opportunity to pass this knowledge down to future generations without them having the need to do the painstaking research all over again. Visits to various UK sites that have dedicated memorials to the **COURTENAY, CAREW, and ELERS** families give us immeasurable pride and give us just as much satisfaction as seeing Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, Tower of London etc. Memorials and effigies like those contained in Old Chelsea Church on Cheyne Walk, St Blaise Church Hacombe, St Peters Church Bickenhill Warwickshire, St Marys Church Shevioc, Exeter Cathedral to name a few, offer us tangible features to follow our ancestors' lives through the centuries. Also features like Carew Castle in Pembrokeshire and the three street names that exist in the UK dedicated to the **ELERS** name (we are aware of three – are there more?)

It is at this point we would ask your readers to convey to us any other memorials that exist dedicated to the **COURTENAY, CAREW, and ELERS** names.

Before I return you to Carew's arrival in NZ, let me convey a picture to you a small snippet of the history behind the lady that he was very shortly going to wed. Her name was Meri **WHAKAMAIRU**, granddaughter of a very prominent Māori Chief, **TE KOROU**, who lived in the Wairarapa on the east coast of NZ's North Island. In Māoridom the North Island was known as Te Ika-a-Māui due to its fish-like shape (tail to the north, head to the south). In Māori mythology, Māui is credited with fishing up the North Island using a flax fishing line and a fishhook made from a jaw-bone that his grandmother had given him.

TE KOROU was born late in the eighteenth century. By 1840 he was married to Hine-whaka-aea. About 1834 **TE KOROU** was forced to flee his home in the Wairarapa by the invasion of northern tribes. **TE KOROU** was captured but he escaped after tricking one of his captors by offering to rearrange his load, seized his tomahawk, killed him and escaped into the bush. When peace was finally made between the Wairarapa people and the invaders, **TE KOROU** was among the negotiators. Various tribes began returning home from 1841 onwards and **TE KOROU** re-established his position as one of the principal leaders in the northern Wairarapa.

In the 1840's **TE KOROU** and his family were drawn towards Christianity. He had at least two children: a daughter Irihapeti, a son Te Turuki (later known by his baptismal name Karaitiana or Christian). When the missionary William **COLENZO** visited **TE KOROU**, his daughter Irihapeti was about to be married to Ihaia **WHAKAMAIRU**. In 1848 **COLENZO** baptised all four of the **TE KOROU** family – **TE KOROU** himself took the name Te Retimana (Richmond) **TE KOROU**, and his wife Hine-whaka-aea became Hoani (Joan/ Joanna).

As European settlement penetrated Wairarapa, tensions grew between younger men wishing to sell land, and their elders, who at first preferred to lease. However to preserve something for themselves from the maelstrom of land selling, the older chiefs, whose authority would earlier have gone unchallenged, became sellers themselves. The land on what was to become the main town in the Wairarapa, Masterton, was soon transferred to the Crown (the previous three paragraphs were sourced from Te Ara, The Encyclopedia of NZ).

Now back to the arrival of Carew. By late 1880 he had settled in Masterton and the next year he fathered a child before he met and married Meri **WHAKAMAIRU** (daughter of the afore-mentioned Irihapeti **TE KOROU** and her husband Ihaia **WHAKAMAIRU**). Prior to meeting Carew, Meri had become a widow with a young son on the death of her husband, a Scotsman. Carew and Meri brought this child up as well as producing twelve children themselves, the first born in March 1883 and the twelfth born in November 1896. Of those twelve, seven died as youngsters ranging from 1 month to ten years of age. Of the remaining five, only three had families of their own.

One of those three (Elizabeth Matangihau **ELERS**, 1890-1914) only had one child before she died at the age of twenty four. Amazingly that one child James Rupuha **ELERS** (my grandfather) and his two wives Whanaupani and Helen, produced 21 children, the second eldest, William Ihaia **ELERS** was my father. An interesting conversational piece is that Whanaupani died giving birth to her eighth child Pani, who was born weighing in at 14lbs! James then took a second wife Helen, who brought with her a son from a previous marriage. James and Helen then proceeded to have twelve children from 1942 through to 1956. Helen died in 1956 at the young age of 38. So from the first of the siblings' birth in 1927 to the last in 1956, the two wives produced twenty one children.

Most of the twenty one siblings were put into homes or were fostered. Sheer numbers prevented James from earning a wage and bringing up his family. To his credit he kept in regular contact with them all to ensure in later life each sibling would still know where all the others lived and thereby keep in touch. Of the twenty one, eight are still alive. I am privileged to have lived in an era whereby I had the opportunity to meet each and every one of them. It still gives me sad emotions to know that many of the current grand children and great grandchildren did not have the opportunity to meet all the members of this amazing family. Each and every one is/was a model of what society expects of its citizens with a high standard of discipline and high work ethics. Every three or four years we all gather for family reunions to ensure our family stays nice and tight as a unit. From those twenty one children there are around five hundred descendants, that is five hundred descended from one husband and two wives!

I mentioned three paragraphs above that only three of Carew and Meri's children produced families. Another was a son Charles Tarewa **ELERS** (1893-1948), the ninth born of the twelve. Charles and his wife Te Rauoriwa produced seven children. Although I do not have the indepth knowledge of Charles's family as I do of that of James, I think I can safely say there are probably in the vicinity of four hundred descendants of that couple.

The third one to have a family was Ethel Louisa (aka Timina) **ELERS** who had three husbands. I estimate around 100 desendants from Ethel and her husbands. Ethel died in 1918 from influenza, the year of the birth of a daughter Ethel (Ettie). Ettie was taken in by her brother Carew Thomas **ELERS** (1886-1931) and his wife Hohepina (Kitty). This Carew was the first surviving child of Carew and Meri (their two previous births in 1883 and 1884, Mary and George, both died within weeks of birth). Ethel's other children were Muriel, Marjorie and Louise.

Now, to return to the life of Carew and Meri. Carew was a teacher at a Māori school in a small community called Te Oreore on the outskirts of Masterton, teaching English and arithmetic to the local Māori population. However as he was not a certified teacher he was obliged by Government law to cease teaching. Over the years he became a fluent speaker of the Māori language albeit spoken with a very marked English accent. He was a keen rugby player, captain of the Te Oreore team, and one of only three Europeans in that team. After his time as a teacher he went on to work in a variety of occupations including a horsebreaker, a chainman, a labourer, a surveyor's assistant and in later years as a Native Agent acting on behalf of Māori families in the Native Land Court. He compiled wills for Māori people and did translation work for lawyers. In addition to the afore-mentioned twelve children that Carew and Meri birthed, they also had another two living at home with them – their grandchildren James Rupuha **ELERS** (son of Elizabeth Matangihau mentioned above), and Louise Matangihau **ELERS** (daughter of Timina mentioned above), as a result of their mothers dying aged 30 and 24 respectively.

THE GOLDFIELDS (from the writings of Roger Maaka, my Uncle):

A fascinating aspect of Carew's life was his venture to the Klondyke gold fields in Alaska. Carew's companions on this trip were his 19 year old step-son Peter **COWAN** (from Meri's previous marriage to Alexander **COWAN**, the Scotsman mentioned earlier), and Carew's brother-in-law Ropata **MANIHERA** (married to Meri's sister Taraipine). The world found out about the existence of gold in the Klondyke in 1897. Suddenly the "Stampede" was on. It was a major decision for Carew, at 37 years of age, to leave his wife and family behind and chase a potential fortune on the other side of the world. They had no gold prospecting experience. It was an expensive business and they did not have much money as they struggled to make ends meet the whole time. There were risks – leaky boats, freezing temperatures, impossible terrain, gangs of armed criminals as well as con-men and women who fleeced prospectors incessantly.

The trio boarded the SS Otway on 14 March 1898. It was a fourteen day trip from Auckland NZ to Honolulu Hawaii. In Honolulu the men from the Otway had a game of rugby (reportedly the first game of rugby to have been played on the island). Over 400 spectators attended and a member of the Hawaiian royal family played in the game. The Hawaiians won the game four tries and a conversion to three tries, one of which was scored by Carew. In his letter to Meri he said *We played a match in Honolulu with their football team, but being a little stiff we did not make a great show*".

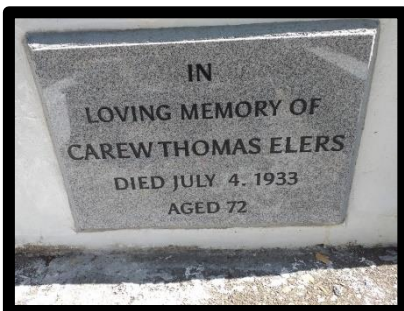
They finally arrived in Skagway in April 1898 ("last Tuesday" according to a letter from Ropata to his wife Taraipine). From there they had to take a year's worth of supplies by packhorses through the White Pass to the goldfields. The land rose 2800 feet in 20 miles to White Pass which included "Dead Horse Gulch" where more than 5000 packhorses died. From the summit they were sled down to Lake Bennett, a boat building town. From there they had to travel 60 miles down the Yukon River to Fort Dawson. They built their own boat and the entry on the register is *"Jun 3 1898, ELERS, C., Masterton, NZ; Boat 541"*

The only record of their exploits on the goldfields was published in the Wairarapa Daily Times, 6 September 1898. A letter from Carew states that "they had just returned from prospecting for gold but their efforts were unsuccessful. At present **ELERS** and his party are going to Dawson City to look for work. They have very little money and only enough provisions to last four or five months. They cannot do any more prospecting until they can earn money to buy provisions with. He states that he has walked over 280 miles with his swag on his back prospecting. He concludes the letter by hoping that their search for work will be successful, otherwise, when their supply of provisions is exhausted, he does not know what they will do".

Not long after he wrote that letter Carew and Peter decided to leave for home. Ropata opted to stay. Carew decided to leave before he became completely penniless. After hitching a ride on a boat dealing in the illegal trading of sugar to the local Indian people, they eventually arrived in Vancouver. They managed to get jobs on a ship to pay their way back home. Carew worked as a stoker and Peter as a cabin boy. They eventually made it home on 14 November 1898, and a short notice in the Wairarapa Daily Times the next day announced *Messrs **ELERS** and **COWAN** returned to Masterton last night from Klondyke. They are in good health but altogether failed to strike it rich.*

A very inauspicious note on which to end what must have been an adventure of a lifetime.

Carew Thomas **ELERS** and wife Meri lived out the remainder of their lives in Masterton New Zealand. Meri died on June 22 1930, and Carew on July 4 1933. On 22 October 2022, ninety two years and eighty nine years after their respective deaths, their headstones were replaced with new ones after some fundraising carried out by our families. It is of importance to us to hold dear the treasured memories of our tūpuna (our ancestors) so the refurbishment of their headstones is indicative of our intentions to hold them close to our hearts.



OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST:

-ELERS PORTRAITS:

Within the last six months we have been very privileged to have been gifted nine portraits of different **ELERS** ancestors dating back to the eighteenth century, the earliest being that of Peter **ELERS** who was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1753. Peter was married to Dorothy **CAREW**. The portraits are currently being held in Cambridge UK. and we are in the process of working out transportation,

Customs procedures for importation into NZ and then to have them displayed with pride here in New Zealand.

-TEA CADDY WITH THE ELMERS COAT OF ARMS ENGRAVED INTO IT:

In March 2020 a sterling silver tea caddy was auctioned at Chiswick Auctions in London. The advertising associated with this auction piece was as follows:

“A George 111 sterling silver tea caddy, London 1789 by Andrew Fogelberg & Stephen Gilbert (reg. July 1780). Of hexagonal form, the domed hinged lid with a movable ring handle. The front with keyhole to internal lock, also later engraved with a coat of arms above the motto GLORIA VIRTUTIS UMBRA. The lid engraved with a crest of between two dove’s wings, an escutcheon of the arms, viz. gyronny of twelve pieces arg and gu in the centre point an escutcheon or. Fully marked underneath and lion passant only on lid”

The crest and arms as described above are for **ELMERS**. The item was “For William **ELMERS** J.P.,D.L. William was the son of Carew **ELMERS** (1755-1821) and his wife Susanna **FARROW** (1762). Carew was son of George **ELMERS** (1720-1784) and wife Mary **CHARON**”.

I was very fortunate to lodge the winning bid for this family treasure.

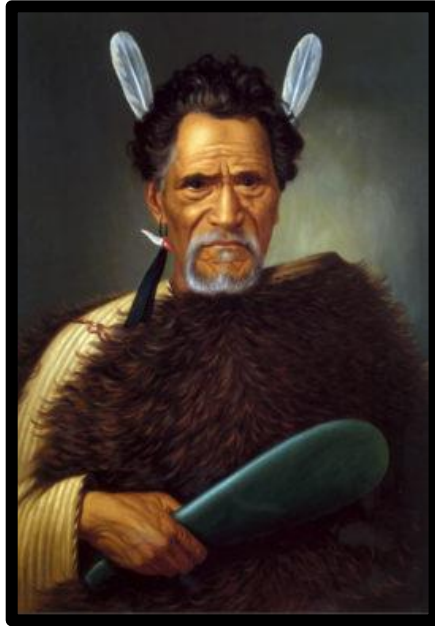


- **PORTRAIT OF RETIMANA TE KOROU (painted by Gottfried Lindauer):**

A portrait of Retimana **TE KOROU** was being presented for auction as reported in the Wairarapa Daily Times on 27 June 1974. The portrait was found on a rubbish pile in one of the homes owned by the Beetham family, reputed to be the family that commissioned the portrait. It was expected the auction would fetch in the vicinity of \$7000.00.

Mr **CAIRNS**, a local resident with an interest in Māori history, appealed to the town’s organisations to donate funds to help keep the portrait in the Wairarapa. The final auction figure bid by the Wairarapa Arts Foundation of \$14400.00 far exceeded the amount raised by the townsfolk so it launched an appeal after the auction. Donations from **TE KOROU** descendants, Masterton Trust Land Trust, Licensing Trust, and private individuals, got the job done.

After celebrations at the graveside of **TE KOROU**, a private viewing of the portrait at the Arts Centre for those who donated, and a welcome by the local Māori community to thank all supporters of the appeal, it was reported in the newspaper that “the portrait is now in the permanent possession of the Wairarapa Arts Centre so that there is no chance of its being lost again”.



RETIMANA TE KOROU
PORTRAIT

And so ends this narrative of the arrival of Carew Thomas **ELERS** into New Zealand in 1880, and the impact he had on forging an extraordinary family, deeply aware of its Māori whakapapa (genealogy) as well as its European roots from Royalty down through the highly respected and well documented **COURTENAY** and **CAREW** families.

Again, we appeal to your readers to update us on anything that you consider may be of interest to us and in particular lead us to contacts in the UK with whom we can correspond to expand our knowledge about **WHENCE WE CAME**.

Tony **ELERS**.

9 November 2022.