

**FIFTY YEARS SINCE HE DIED**  
**AND STILL THE QUESTION IS ASKED**  
**WHAT'S IN THE NAME –**  
**KETTLEBY – KETÈLBÈY?**



By John Sant author – ALBERT W. KETÈLBÈY  
1875 – 1959 From the Sanctuary of his Heart.

At the half dozen or so Ketèlbey talks I now give each year to Music Societies, Historical Societies, Social Groups and Church Groups, etc. one of the most frequent questions I get asked concerns not the old maestro's music, but the originality or genuineness of his name!

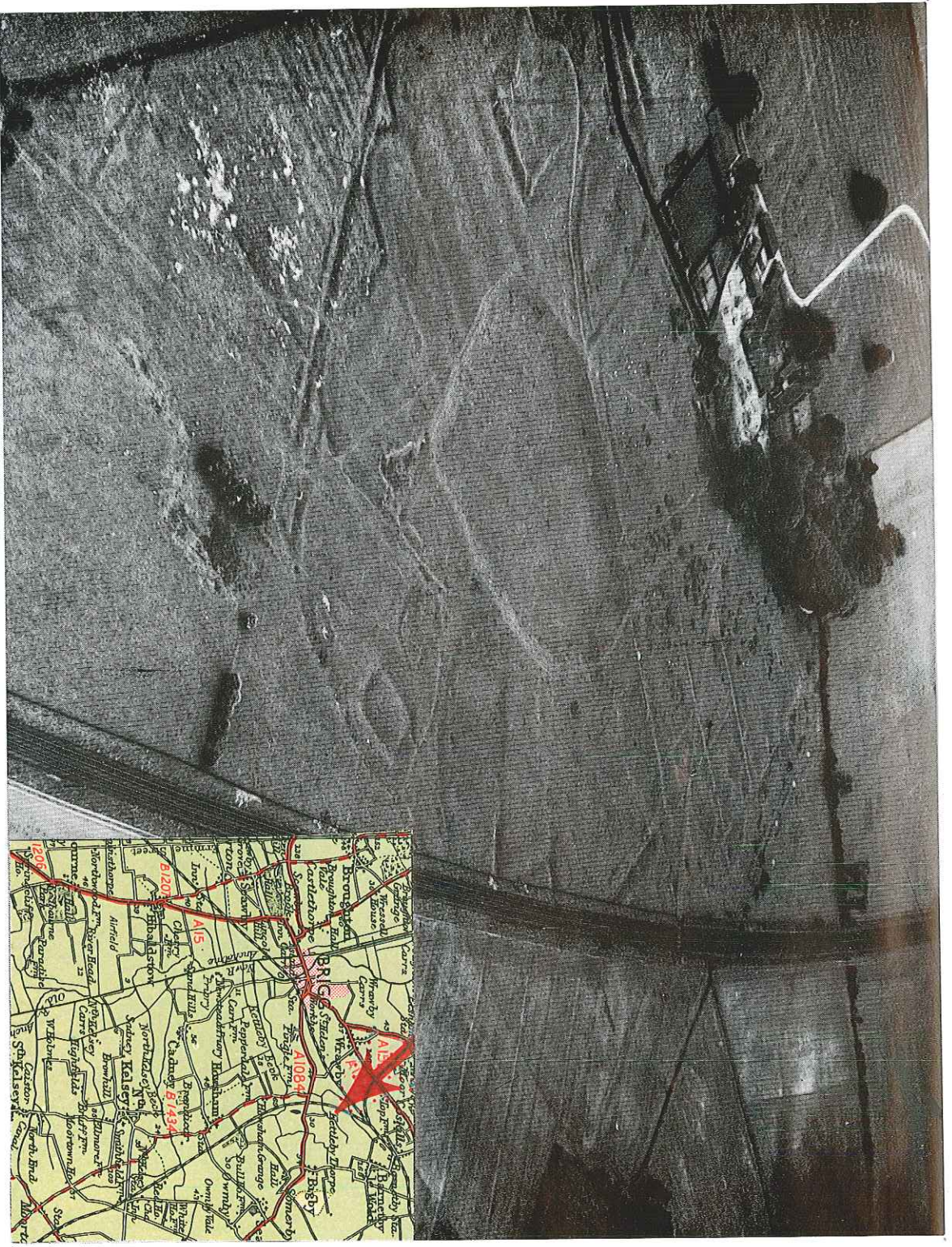
In my explanation here, I tell questioners of the discovery of the original birth certificate of Albert William KETELBEY and how the name evolved over the years from originally being KETTLEBY or KETTELBÈY – being of Scandinavian and most likely Danish origin – the 'give away' being the last 'by' letters of the name.

It is believed that Albert's father George was the one who changed the family name from how it was spelt then – KETTLEBEY (which is how it appeared on George's birth certificate) to KETELBEY (which is how it is spelt on George's marriage certificate). The added accent over the second 'e' of the name was Albert's doing! This was for two reasons. First and foremost he hated the name being referred to as Kettlebey (i.e. the boiling receptacle with a 'bey' on the end) and by inserting an accent over the second 'e' – Ketèlbey – this pointed to the emphasis being put on the second syllable i.e. Ke – TEL – bey when it was pronounced. The second reason was a very clever one, in that this added a foreign air to his name. These are good enough reasons why many who worked with him chose simply to refer to him as Mr. 'K'!

Having explained all this, I have to admit this still begs the question from where exactly does the name come? And I think I may have found the answer.....

Since publishing my book on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2000, I have acquired a wealth of additional information on Ketèlbey from a wide selection of sources including several relatives of the composer. One fascinating contact has been with the nephew of Ketèlbey's second wife Mabel (1903 – 1980), who was to become very close to the composer and was with him when he died. Another more recent contact has been with the husband of the youngest granddaughter of Albert's brother – the violinist Harold Ketèlbey (1883 – 1965), who with the remaining members of Harold's family had migrated from South Africa to live in New South Wales, Australia. Harold had previously emigrated to South Africa with his wife and daughter in 1923 to help Henry Lyell-Taylor set up the Durban Civic Orchestra, and become its leader.

I had previously mused over the possibility of the family name having anything to do with the small village of Ab Kettleby near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, but from historical family records held by this family in Australia I was told that the name originates from North Lincolnshire and a small village near the



Aerial photograph of Kettleby Thorpe taken in 1951, showing earthworks of the original village.  
With acknowledgement – Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs, Unit for Landscape Modelling.

market town of Brigg. Through her genealogy work on the Ketelbey family it was Albert's youngest sister Doris alias Caroline (1896 – 1990) – the historian of the family – who was able to trace her family back to 1410 and a Johannes Kettleby de Kettleby with predecessors according to her coming originally from Kettleby Thorpe, previously one of several Viking settlements in this area of North Lincolnshire.

The site of this deserted medieval village has for many years now been Kettleby Thorpe Farm. So it was last September I set off with my wife Roberta to find this farm and discover all that I could about this little spot in the open countryside of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Since 1964 the farm has been owned by the Morwood family, and in meeting Dave Morwood we were given a guided tour of where original earthworks of the village were sited. Alas with the exception of part of the moat area and the stream called Kettleby Beck, there is now not much to see. After years of ploughing, most of the site is overgrown and following the quarrying of gravel for the local railway line in 1847, this left a pit some two acres in size to a depth of ten feet right in the centre of the site, which is now a fishing lake. From a journal of the Scunthorpe Museum Society – *'Excavation on the site of the deserted medieval village of Kettleby Thorpe, Lincolnshire'* by Eleanor Russell and others, I discovered that several excavations had been carried out over the years, the final one being in 1964. Certain artefacts dated the site back to the Bronze Age, with other artefacts and finds giving evidence of Roman settlement. These and other artefacts and finds from later periods are now in Scunthorpe Museum.

Proof of Viking settlement on the site is significant. Firstly Kettleby Thorpe lies in the heart of Danelaw Country, being adjacent to the now well known ramblers walk called 'The Viking Way', which ambles over country from the River Humber to Oakham in Rutland. Secondly, and what I think is more interesting is that the name most probably originates from Viking settlement on the site.

The names given to many towns and villages once known to be Viking settlements and ending in "by" originate from personal names (possibly from the name of the chief of the settlement). Bigby for example which is the nearest village to Kettleby Thorpe Farm is derived from an Old Norse personal name Bekki with an Old Norse word býr added (býr meaning settlement or farmstead) which becomes "Bekkibýr" and in the English Bigby. Likewise another local village Barnetby le Wold derives from the original Scandinavian name of "Beornnoth" with the "býr" added – becoming in the English Barnetby.

And so is the name Kettleby Thorpe derived similarly? The original name of the village was simply Torp as recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 with a population of approximately 90 people. The word Torp is Old Norse meaning hamlet or a smaller village colonised from a larger one, which in the English becomes Thorpe, with many place names in England now ending in .....thorpe. The forename was probably later adapted from the nearby village of Kettleby, which is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as having a population of approximately 120 people. Kettleby is now a hamlet district of Brigg, the original Viking village site so called from having been the residence of Kettel, a Danish Captain under Canute.



Part of the site as it is today.

I have been unable to find anything in my recent research on Johannes Kettleby de Kettleby – traced back to 1410 by the late Doris Ketelbey’s geneology work, but then I am the novice and she was a Professor of History – which must give significant credence to the existence of this family member, and indeed the leads which directed me to the lovely open countryside of North Lincolnshire and a farm called Kettleby Thorpe. I know not whether Albert ever came here, but then again if he did we would probably have been given another one of his picturesque compositions in the form of “In the midst of a Viking Village”!!

I am the first to admit that I have not ‘proven’ anything here, but I do hope that what little I have been able to research and write throws a little more light onto what is to many the fascinating name of Albert W. Ketelbey, whose light orchestral music still brings joy to our hearts fifty years after his death.