

**John Clement :
his identity, and his Marshfoot House in Essex ***

STUDENTS of More need no introduction to John Clement, the *puer meus* of *Utopia*. His origins and date of birth are unknown. He is said to have attended St. Paul's School in London, studying under the classicist William Lily. There appears to be no independent corroboration from school records. By the year 1514 he is reported to have been a member of More's household, where he was tutor to More's children in Latin and Greek. Unless this be a part of More's affabulation, he took « the boy Clement » along to Bruges and Antwerp on his 1515 embassy. In More's house Clement met his future wife, More's « adopted » daughter, Margaret Giggs, whose age in 1527, according to the sketch of the More family portrait in Basel, was 22, exactly the same as her *cognata* Margaret More Roper.

In 1518 or 1519 Clement was reported to have been appointed Cardinal Wolsey's reader in rhetoric (Latin) at Corpus Christi College, a college founded by Bishop Richard Foxe of Winchester and dedicated to the new humanistic curriculum. ¹ Somewhat later, Clement was made reader in Greek at Oxford ² and he lectured to a larger audience than anyone before. ³ Nonetheless he left Oxford in the early 1520s in order to study medicine in Italy. He appears to have travelled via Louvain and Basel, where he met Erasmus. ⁴ He brought a copy of *Utopia* to Leonico at Padua in 1524. ⁵ By March 1525, he received his M. D. at Siena ; his combined skills in classics and medicine enabled him to help Lupset, his successor at Oxford, complete the Aldine edition of Galen at about the same time. ⁶ In 1525 Clement was a member of the royal household as Sewer of the Chamber *ultra mare*. ⁷ His name, listed as from London, is included among other sewers of the chamber in the accounts for 1526. ⁸

On his return to England, Dr. Clement was admitted to the College of Physicians in London on 1 February 1527-28. He was in the king's service when sent with two other royal doctors under Dr. Butts in 1529 to attend Cardinal Wolsey, now out of favour and languishing at Esher. ⁹ In 1535, he was consulted on the liver of John Fisher, then a

prisoner in the Tower. ¹⁰ Three years later, the records show him receiving from the royal household a salary of £ 10 semi-annually. ¹¹ In 1539, however, the salary was cancelled. ¹²

Clement was made president of the College of Physicians in 1544. Jack Leslau has found that the College possesses no documents signed by him as president. This has been confirmed by the Wellcome Foundation. ¹³

The biographical article in the *DNB* fails to mention a number of curiosities regarding John Clement. It is customarily assumed that he was born around 1500, making him a boy when he first joined the More household, and hence the *puer meus* of *Utopia* (1516). ¹⁴ There is, nonetheless, an entry in the register of the University of Louvain of the enrolment of a « Johannes Clemens » on 13 February 1489, with the note « non juravit » added. ¹⁵ The name John Clement is not common on the Continent except as a combined Christian name. The note « non juravit » is unusual in the Louvain register, and it is remarkable to find the undoubted John Clement of our account appearing in an entry of January 1551 with the unique note : « Joannes Clemens, medicine doctor, anglus, nobilis (non juravit ex rationabili quadam et occulta causa, sed tamen promisit se servaturum juramenta consueta). » ¹⁶ The chances of there having been two non-juring John Clements without family background or specific place of origin within sixty-two years of each other are negligible.

It is interesting to read also of Clement's imprisonment in the Fleet following More's own imprisonment in the Tower. A letter written by John Dudley to Thomas Cromwell on 11 October 1534 states : « farthermore as towchyng maistr Clements mattr I beseche your maistership not to gyue to much credens to some great men who peraventure wyll be intercessours of the matter and to make the beste of it for Mr Clement / by cause peraventure they theym selves be the greatest berers of it / as by that tyme I have shewed you how whotly the sendyng of Mr Clement to the flete was taken, by some that may chawnce you thynke to be your frende / you wyll not a litle marvayle / ... » ¹⁷ What indeed was Clement's « matter » of which other great men were conceivably the greatest bearers ?

One authority states that Clement was imprisoned in the Tower with More for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy. ¹⁸

In 1545 John Clement and his wife were granted the lease of Friar's Mede, Marshfoot in Hornchurch, Essex for thirty years at 20 shillings per annum by New College, Oxford. ¹⁹ In 1549, Friar's Mede was leased, as it were, from under Clement ; the new regime under Edward had begun. Clement left the country for Louvain. He lost his extensive library at his town house in Bucklersbury, consisting of 180 books, and was unable to regain them on his return to England in the reign of Mary. ²⁰

The site of Marshfoot is discernible today at Ordinance Survey grid reference TQ 513 825. It lies not far from the electric railway which links Rainham with Dagenham. Slightly sunken from the lane, the plot can be made out on the edge of the former marshland which stretches south towards an invisible River Thames.

The Public Record Office in Chancery Lane contains an inventory of Marshfoot house, listing the items which were confiscated by Sir Anthony Wingfield with the approval of no less a personage than Sir William Cecil, the future Lord Burghley. The inventory is dated 28 August 1552, twelve days after the death of Wingfield. ²¹

The complete listing is too tedious to transcribe. In the chamber over the hall there were « v cussshins with dragons pictures » and « an olde turkey carpet » among other items including « a shefe of arrowes », « ij paire of splents ij salletes / an armyngswerd(e ?) a poole axe / iii bills ». Whether such weaponry was common among physicians of the time, I am unable to say.

There was a chapel chamber in Marshfoot and it contained the following items which were notably Catholic : « an awlter / a picture of our Lady / a picture of the v wowndes / a masse booke / ij cruetes », « a surples », « iij latten candlestickes for tapers », « a hallow water potte », « a portesse with claspes of silver and gilte / ». The picture of the Five Wounds calls to mind the banner insignia of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the most serious of all the rebellions under Henry VIII. But the picture may have been common in such a liturgical context.

There is a touch of poetry in the « dove house with a smalle flisght of doves / with a hansom garden place but overgrowne with grasse / ». It is a description of a place waiting for the overdue return of its owner.

Clement was unable to regain his lost possessions after he returned to England on 19 March 1554. Nonetheless, his former importance was restored under Mary. In 1554 his son, Thomas Clement, M. A., was granted a royal annuity of £ 20. ²²

With Mary's death and the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, the Clements took leave of England for the last time. Four years later (March 1562) John Clement appears in the Louvain register : « Dominus Joannes Clemens, nobilis, Anglus. » ²³ The similarity with the previous entry in January 1551 is unmistakable. What is the meaning of *nobilis* ? Why *Dominus* ? Nothing in the known history of the More family suggests that the Greek and Latin tutor was of noble birth.

The last Louvain entry, dated 1568, is brief : « Dominus Joannes Clement, in theologia ». ²⁴ The possible span of the Louvain register entries is an astonishing 79 years ; it merits further examination.

Shortly before his death Clement moved from Bruges to Malines. He took up residence at 1 Blokstraat, a few feet from the church of Saints Peter and Paul, where lie remains of Margaret of Austria, ²⁵ aunt of Charles V and patroness of Erasmus, More, ²⁶ and Josquin Des Prés. Margaret Clement died on 6 July 1570, the anniversary of More's execution, and was buried in St. Rombout's cathedral in the Grote Markt. Clement himself died on 1 July 1572 in the year that the Spanish sacked the ancient imperial town, and was buried beside his wife near the high altar of the cathedral. ²⁷

35 Richmond Road
Basingstoke, Hants RG21 2NX

Thomas Merriam

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1. *The Dictionary of National Biography*, IV, 489. Mention should be made of the one published biography, *John Clement* by E.A. Wenkebach (Leipzig, 1925).

2. *DNB*, IV, 489. Sir Kenneth Dover, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford wrote to the author, 22 February 1984, as follows : « So far as I can discover (from Fowler's very detailed *History of C.C.C.*) (pp. 88, 369) the sole evidence for Clement as lector is Harpsfield, *Hist. Eccl. Angl.*, p. 644. Clement was lector in Greek (not rhetoric & humanity) from 1518(?) to 1520, & there is no record of his ever having been a student at the College. The fact that his appointment was in Greek makes all the difference, I think ; there weren't many people around who could teach Greek. »

3. Maria Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (London, 1986), p. 31.

4. A.B. Emden, *A Bibliographical Register of the University of Oxford A.D. 1501-1540* (Oxford, 1974), p. 121.

5. F.A. Gasquet, *Cardinal Pole and His Early English Friends* (London, 1927), pp. 69-71.

6. Emden, p. 121.

7. A.W. Reed, « John Clement and His Books », *The Library*, 4th Series, vi (1926), p. 330.

8. *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* (17 Henry VIII, 1526), IV, Part 1, No. 1939(8).

9. *DNB*, IV, 489.

10. *L & P Henry VIII* (27 Henry VIII, 1535), VIII, No. 856 (45).

11. *L & P Henry VIII* (30 Henry VIII, 1538), XIII, Part 2, No. 1280(f.11b). This was the same amount as he received from the same source in 1529 ; see *L & P Henry VIII* (20-23 Henry VIII), V, 310.

12. *L & P Henry VIII* (31 Henry VIII, 1539), XIV, Part 2, No. 781(f.68).

13. Most of the information on John Clement contained in this article was uncovered by Jack Leslau and is taken from his research article « Holbein and the Discreet Rebus ».

14. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More vol. IV : « Utopia »* ed. Edward Surtz, S.J. and J.H. Hexter (New Haven, 1965), p. 40.

15. A Schillings, *Matricule de l'Université de Louvain*, III, 31 août 1485 - 31 août 1527 (Brussels, 1958), entry no. 128, p. 42. Jack Leslau has pointed out that this entry stands out among the adjoining entries in its absence of family, place of origin, or qualifying status.

16. A. Schillings, *Matricule IV, février 1528 - février 1569* (Brussels, 1961), entry no. 86, p. 423. During the period covered by volume IV, out of some 26,000 students inscribed, the classification « non juravit » was applied in eight other cases, five of them due to absence of the student at time of registration.

17. *L & P Henry VIII* (26 Henry VIII, 1534), VII, No. 1251, *PRO SP 1/86*, p. 75.

18. Sir Michael McDonnell, *The Register of St. Paul's School 1509-1748* (privately printed for the Governors, 1977).

19. Marjorie McIntosh, « References to people surnamed Clement in the Havering/Hornchurch/Romford materials used by Marjorie McIntosh » (unpublished research report).

20. A.W. Reed, pp. 329-39. His library contained 40 books in Greek, 139 in Latin, and one in English. Reed estimates their monetary value at £ 30 13s 4d, or about US \$ 50,000 today according to my estimate.

21. *PRO SP10/14/71*.

22. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls* (1 Mary, 1554) I, 309, dated 8 May 1554.

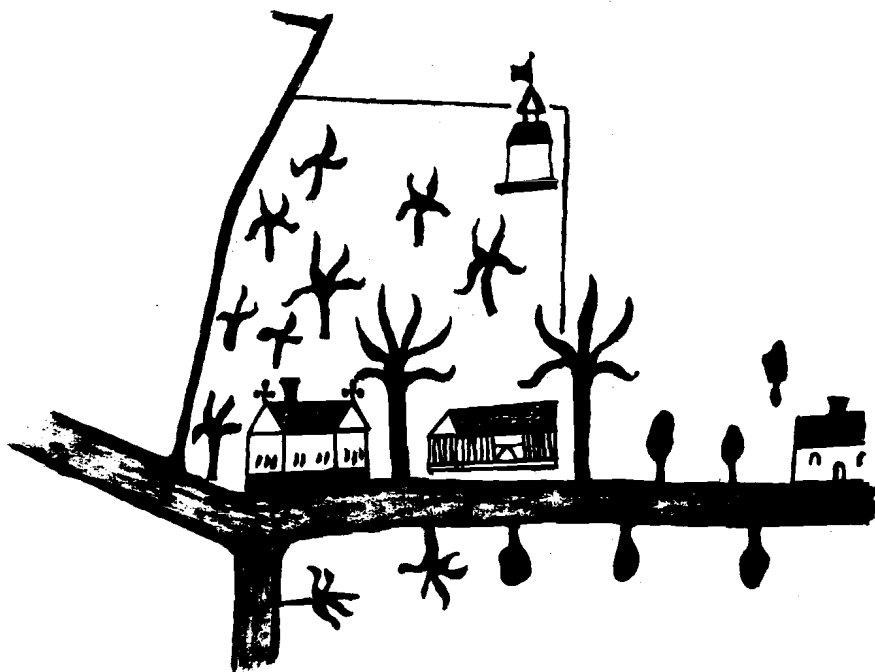
23. A. Schillings, *Matricule IV*, entry no. 3, p. 634.

24. A. Schillings, *Matricule IV*, entry no. 55, p. 738.

25. For the place of residence, *DNB*. Notice the proximity of 1 Blokstraat to the church; I was informed by the Mechelen tourist office that part of the body of Margaret of Austria is buried behind the altar of the church.

26. See Elizabeth F. Rogers, « Margaret of Austria's Gifts to Tunstal, More and Hacket (1529) » in *Moreana* 12 (Nov. 1966), pp. 57-60.

27. Jack Leslau, *art. cit.*, Part II, p. 5. Also *DNB*, IV, p. 489. See *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth Frances Rogers (Princeton, 1947), p. 79. Also, *De illustribus Angliae Scriptoribus*, Item 768 -- « In exilio Confessor obiit Meclinae primo die Iulij, anno post aduentum Messiae 1572, & sepultus est in Ecclesia S. Romboldi prope tabernaculum, iacentque in eodem tumulto coniuges... »



Tracing of Clement's Marshfoot House.

Postscript

The following additional document concerns the age and status of John Clement. To my knowledge, it is unique among written materials in tending to confirm the evidence otherwise available solely from Continental sources: first, for Clement's belonging to an earlier generation than indicated by the presumed birthdate of 1500, and, second, for being of noble birth.

There is a listing given in *L & P Henry VIII* (2 Henry VIII), I, Part 2, Appendix, p. 1550 (f. 10d) of the challengers and those answering the challenge at a feat of arms (*pas d'armes*) planned for the afternoon of 1 June 1510. The list is as follows:

King - Lord Howard	King - John Clement
Knyvet - Earl of Essex	Knevet - Wm Courteney
Howard - Sir John Awdley	Howard - Arthur Plantagenet
Brandon - Ralph Eggerton	Brandon - Chr. Garneys

It would appear that each challenger took on two opponents during the afternoon. Of the ten participants besides Henry VIII himself, Lord Howard, Thomas Knyvet or Knevet, the Earl of Essex, William Courteney, and Arthur Plantagenet were closely related by blood or marriage to the king. Two participants, Lord Howard and Charles Brandon, were to become the premier peers of the realm as the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. Those related to the king belonged all to the generation of the king's mother, Elizabeth of York. Who were the five relatives? Lord Thomas Howard was to become better known as the third Duke of Norfolk when his father, the second Duke, died in 1524. Born in 1473, he was 37 or thereabouts in June 1510. The king was less than 20. Thomas Howard II was then married to Anne Plantagenet, sister of King Henry's mother. He was the king's uncle by marriage.

Sir Thomas Knyvet or Knevet was the son of Eleanor Tyrell, sister of Sir James Tyrell, reputed murderer of the princes in the Tower. He was married to the sister of Lord Thomas Howard. His brother Edmund seems to have studied under Colet, being named in Colet's will.

Henry Bouchier, second Earl of Essex, was Henry's cousin, as he was the son of his great aunt, Anne Woodville, sister of Elizabeth Woodville. He too belonged to the older generation, possibly born in 1471. If this is true, he would have been about 39 in 1510.

William Courteney, 18th Earl of Devonshire, was married to Henry's aunt Catherine, sister of Elizabeth of York.

Arthur Plantagenet was the illegitimate son of Edward IV by his mistress Dame Elizabeth Lucy. He was therefore half-brother to the king's

mother and to the wives of Lord Howard and William Courteney. Howard, Bouchier, Courteney and Plantagenet were of the blood royal in their own right, irrespective of other links in the case of ties by marriage.

Charles Brandon, future Duke of Suffolk, would become Henry's brother-in-law after his marriage to the king's sister Mary on the death of her husband, the French king. He was younger than the others, having been born in 1484.

If we look at the ages of the noble guests on the afternoon of 1 June 1510, we find that the conventional John Clement, *puer meus* of ten years of age, would be notably out of place. However, a John Clement who had been in his teens at Louvain in 1489 would be a contemporary. Furthermore, a noble John Clement would be an appropriate answerer to the king's challenge in the company of such distinguished companions.



Résumé en français.

Pour le *Dictionary of National Biography*, John Clement est un homme de naissance modeste qui à 15 ans accompagne More à Bruges en 1515, étudie puis enseigne à Oxford, devient docteur en médecine à Padoue, épouse une fille adoptive de More, préside le Collège des Médecins, s'exile outre Manche sous Edward VI puis sous Elizabeth, meurt à Malines en 1572. Ce *curriculum vitae* ne rend pas compte de tout. Non content de l'étoffer en décrivant le manoir occupé dans l'Essex par Clement et l'inventaire de ses biens, Thomas Merriam relève son nom dans plusieurs documents qui suggèrent une ascendance mystérieuse :

1. En 1510 (postscript) John Clement participe à un pas d'armes avec Henry VIII et des seigneurs de la plus haute noblesse, tous nés au 15e siècle.

2. Un *Joannes Clemens* anglais immatriculé à Louvain en 1489 puis en 1551 est dispensé du serment, la seconde fois « pour une raison occulte ». Les 62 ans d'intervalle peuvent suggérer deux personnages, mais ce nom est rare, et la dispense exceptionnelle.

3. En 1534, Cromwell fait allusion à un secret concernant John Clement et parle des 'grands porteurs' de ce secret.

Bref, le dernier mot n'est pas dit sur le *puer meus* de l'*Utopie*. Jack Leslau essaie avec l'auteur de résoudre l'énigme de John Clement.