John Harington Encyclopedia Article

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1561-1612

British writer and inventor credited with the original concept and construction of the valve-operated water closet (1586). Harington designed and installed his first water closet in his home near Bath, England. In 1596, he published a satire entitled *A New Discourse upon a Stale Subject Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax*, which described the water closet in his home. That same year, he installed his flushing toilet for his godmother, Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) at Richmond Palace. Harington's invention was not very sanitary and had poor drainage and venting, so it was not put into general use.