

THOMAS CRAPPER PLUMBING REVOLUTIONARY

by **Brian Roberts, CIBSE Heritage Group**



Thomas Crapper, 1836-1910

Thomas Crapper was probably born in 1836, the exact date being uncertain. One report gives the date as 1835, but it is known Thomas was baptised on the 28th September, 1836 in Waterside, Thorne, in Yorkshire. His father, Charles was a sailor, possibly a steamboat captain. His early years are also unclear. One story is at the age of eleven he walked to London and found employment with a plumber in Chelsea. It also claimed that in 1853 he was apprenticed to his brother George, who was a Master Plumber in Chelsea. Reyburn, in his book, states that the young Crapper came to London in 1848 and took a job with a Master Plumber in Robert Street in Chelsea.

In 1861 Thomas Crapper, having completed his apprenticeship and served three years as a journeyman plumber, set himself up as a Sanitary Engineer “with his own brass foundry and workshops in nearby Marlborough Road.” He had married Maria Green in 1860 and they had one son, George.

Although the name Crapper is now well known to the public and in the plumbing industry, it is generally agreed that he had little to do with the development of the water closet.

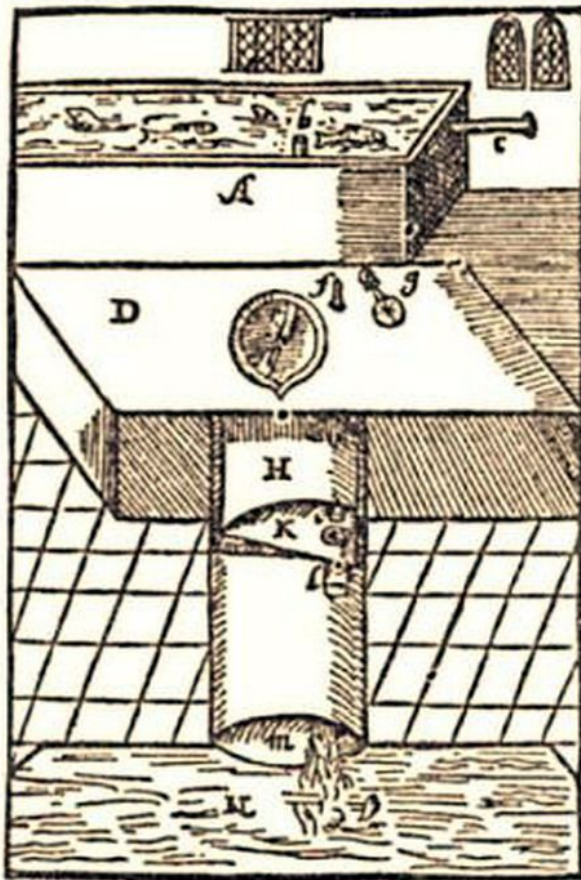
Thomas Crapper may be considered as the inventor of the Bathroom Showroom by displaying his wares in the large plate glass windows at his Marlborough Works. “This caused quite a stir and it is said that ladies observing the china bowls in the windows became faint at this shocking sight.”



Crapper's Marlboro' Works and Showrooms

EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATER CLOSET

The invention of the flushing toilet is attributed to John Harrington in 1596, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, while in 1775 a patent for a form of water closet was obtained by the watchmaker Alexander Cummings. A few years later, in 1778, Joseph Bramah patented what has been described as “the first practical water closet in England.” A patent for the *flush-out* toilet was secured by George Jennings in 1852. Other pioneers in the field set up as sanitary ware manufacturers, including Thomas Twyford (1849), Josiah Jennings (1854), John Shanks (1875), Frederick Humpherson (1876) and Henry Doulton (1890s). Many had started their careers as plumbers, Humpherson having been apprenticed to Crapper.



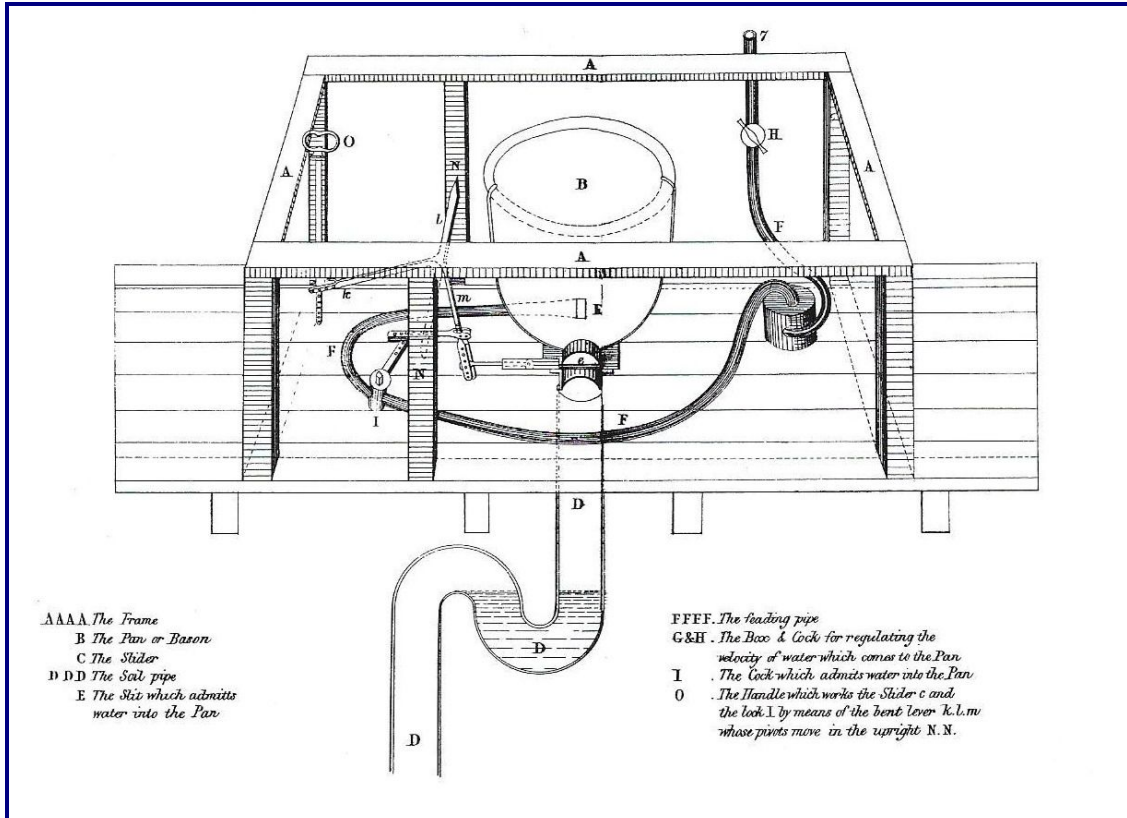
A priuie in perfection

- A. the Cesterne.
- B. the little washer.
- C. the wast pipe.
- D. the seate board.
- E. the pipe that comes from the Cesterne.
- F. the Screw.
- G. the Scallop shell to couer it when it is shut downe.
- H. the stoole pot.
- I. the stopple.
- K. the current.
- L. the sluice.

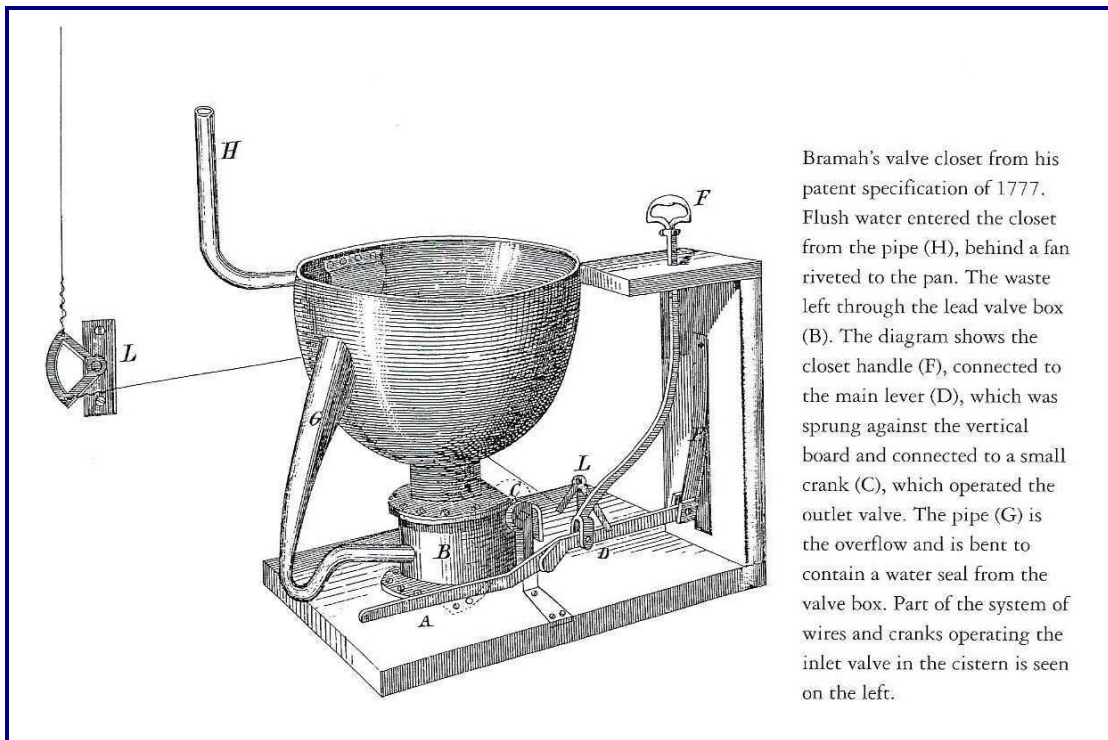
M.N. the vault into which it falles: alwayes remember that () at noone and at night, empirie it, and leaue it halfe a foote deepe in fayre water. And this being well done, and orderly kept, your worst priuie may be as sweet as your best chamber. But to conclude all this in a few wordes, it is but a standing close stoole easilie emptied.

And by the like reason (other formes and proportions obserued) all other places of your house may be kept sweet.

Harrington's flushing toilet of 1596



Cummings patented water closet of 1775



Bramah's patented valve water closet of 1777

Thomas Crapper's place in the history of sanitary engineering is not as an inventor but as a pioneer, alongside many other Victorian manufacturers, who sought to improve standards of public health, and particularly that of domestic sanitation. He did, however, patent at least nine inventions. He devised the *Disconnecting Trap*, an important development in fitting underground drains and produced a *Spring-loaded Lavatory Seat* designed to automatically flush the bowl after use. Others include the *Floating Ballcock* and the *Valveless Water Waste Preventor* (though it is said this was actually the work of one Albert Giblin).

Patent Disconnecting Trap.

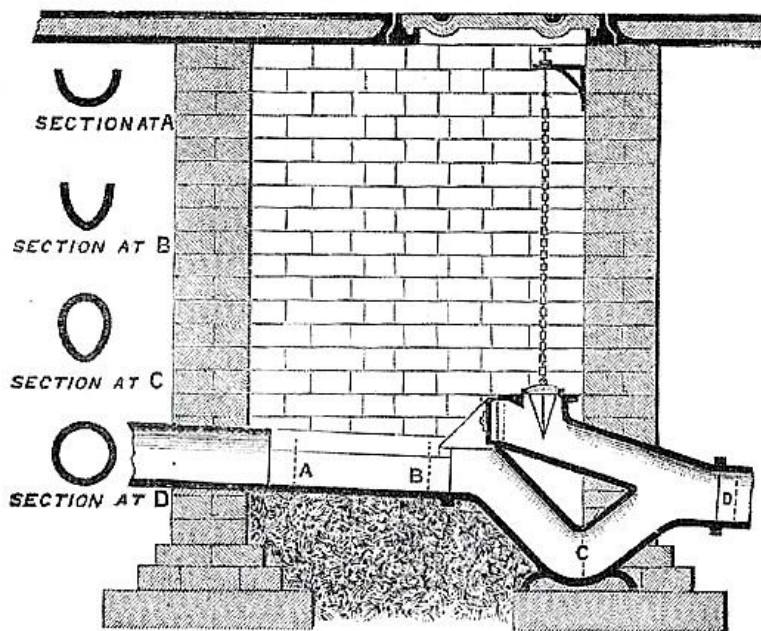
(No. 10,339).

Registered Design, No. 105,149.

Reg. Trade Mark No. 81,187, "The Improved Kenon, Thomas Crapper & Co."

Advantages:—Provision at upper part of Trap for discharging into sewer any accumulation caused by accidental stoppage.

Easy access to passage for sweeping purposes, by means of a suitable brass cap with screw.



No. 506 The Improved Kenon Trap, of Glazed Stoneware with gun-metal valve, galvanized iron chain, pull and bracket, and brass screw cap	4-in.	4 to 6-in.	6-in.	9-in.	12-in.
...	31/6	33/-	35/-	40/6	94/6
If Trap glazed white inside, Extra	3/9	4/-	4/6	8/3	—
„ „ white inside and out „	7/6	8/-	9/-	16/6	—

Crappier's Patent Disconnecting Improved Kenyon stoneware trap

THOMAS CRAPPER & COMPANY, Ltd.

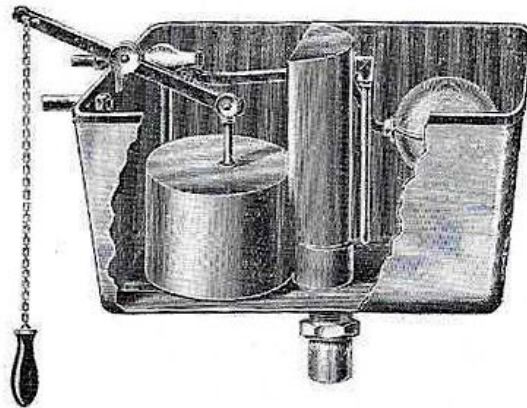
Crapper's Valveless Water Waste Preventer.

(Patent No. 4,990.)

One moveable part only.

Will Flush when two-thirds full.

Equally suitable
for
Private Residences
or
Public Institutions.

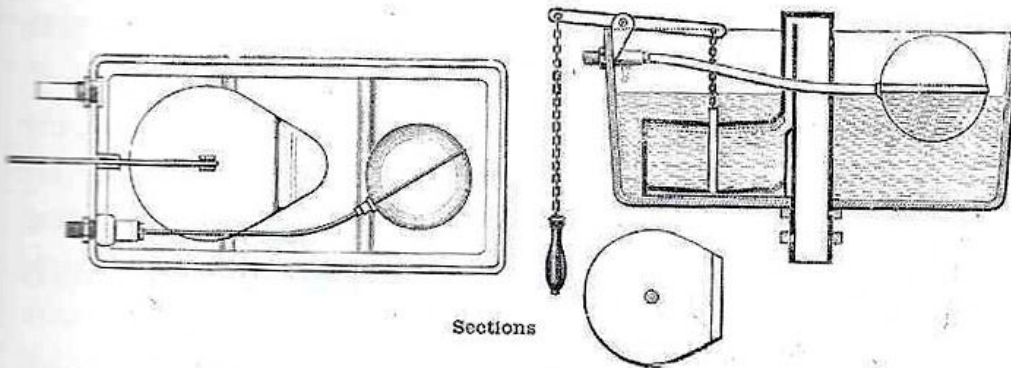


Silent Action.

Certain flush
with
Easy Pull.

No. 814

Quick and Powerful Discharge maintained throughout.



Sections

No. 814.	Crapper's Patent Valveless Water Waste Preventer with $\frac{1}{2}$ in. "Chelsea" Ball Valve and Silencing Pipe, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Overflow, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. Outlet (for $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. or $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. Pipe), Silencing Tube to Syphon, Brass Chain and China Pull		2 gallon	3 gallon
Ditto	ditto	Galvanized	£0 19 6	£1 2 6
Ditto	ditto	Porcelain Enamelled outside and Rust-proof inside	1 5 3	1 9 6
Ditto	ditto	Porcelain Enamelled in and out	1 14 6	1 19 6
			1 19 3	2 4 3

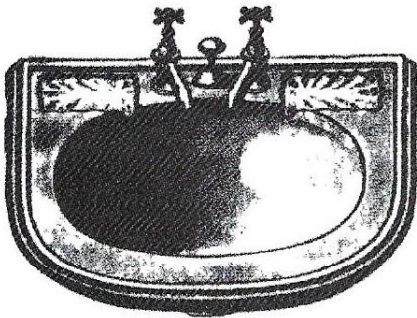
Covers extra—Painted 1/9, Galvanized 3/6, Porcelain Enamelled 4/3.

If with Fullway Bull Valve 2/3 extra.

Crapper's patented Valveless Water Waste Preventer

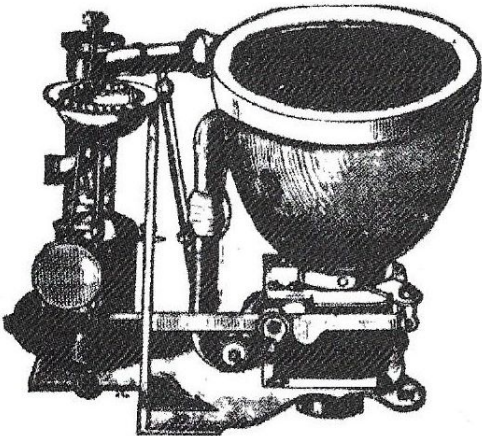
THOMAS CRAPPER & CO.'S

Sanitary Specialities,



IMPROVED LAVATORY BASIN.

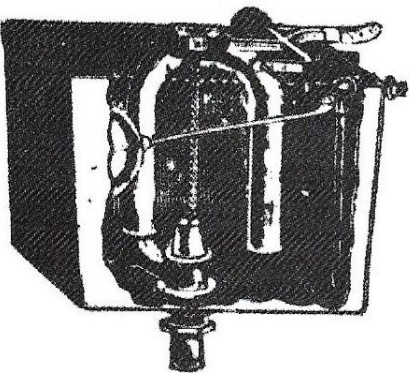
	£ s. d.
White Ware, fitted with combined Overflow and Waste, and $\frac{1}{4}$ Standard Screw-down Valves ...	2 19 6
Plated Fittings, Extra	0 8 6



ELASTIC VALVE CLOSET.

No. 78.—Valve Closet, with white china dish with gold lines, and handle, white ware flushing rim basin, 1 in. supply valve, copper air regulator, complete as shown.

	£3 9 6
If with $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. valve	Extra 0 3 6
„ Ornamental Basin	„ 0 3 6
„ White and Gold Basin	„ 0 8 9
„ Box Enamelled inside	„ 0 4 9
„ Box fitted with Brass Top	„ 0 6 3
„ Box fitted with union to connect Ventilating Pipe	„ 0 3 9
„ 4 in. outlet	„ 0 7 9



IMPROVED SYPHON Water Waste Preventer.

	£ s. d.
Cast-Iron 2 Gallon SYPHON WASTE PREVENTER, with Tranquil Inlet Valve, and Silencing Air Tubes, and Brass Chain and China Pull	1 1 6
Ditto, 3 gallon ditto	1 3 6

50, 52, & 54, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, CHELSEA, LONDON, S.W.

THOMAS CRAPPER & CO.'S SPECIALITIES.

PEDESTAL WASH-DOWN CLOSET.

"The Improved Marlboro',"
WITH LEAD TRAP.



No. 220.
White or Ivory W.C. with 8 lb Lead
P. Trap as shown -- -- 34/6
With Raised Ornamentation -- -- 42/-
If with S. Trap -- -- extra 1/9

VALVE CLOSET.

With Basin and Slop Top in one piece, and Ventilating Union off Overflow Trap.



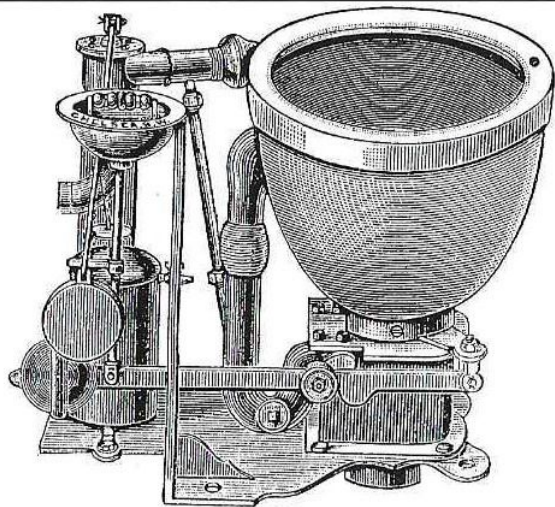
No. 220.
Valve Closet, with White Ware Flushing-rim Basin
with Sand Stop Top, China Dish, 1-in. Supply
Valve, Copper Air Regulator, Ventilating Union
off Trap, complete as shown -- -- 44 7s. 6d.
If with 1 1/2-in. Valve -- -- -- Extra 3/6
" Box Enamelled inside -- -- -- 4/9
" Box lined with Brass Top -- -- -- 6/3



Water Waste Preventer.

Cast-Iron 2 Gallon Brown Waste Preventer with
Tranquil Inlet Valve, and Blanking Air Tubes, £ 4 4
and Brass Chain and Chain Pull -- -- 1 0 6
Ditto, 3 gallon ditto -- -- -- 1 2 6

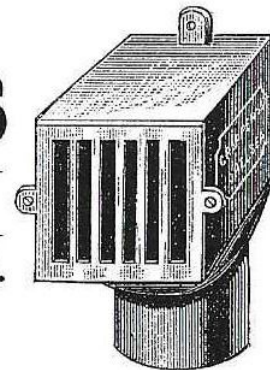
50, 52, & 54, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, CHELSEA,
LONDON, S.W.



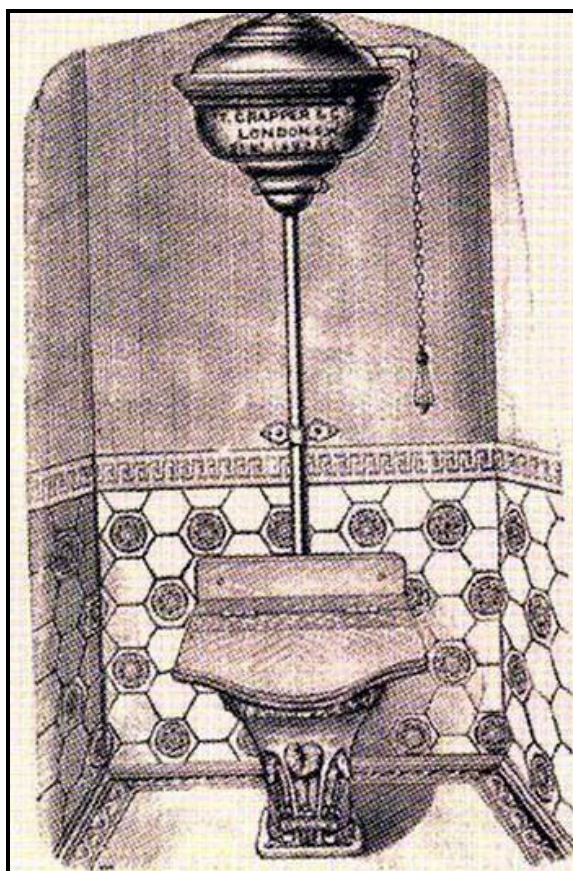
THOMAS CRAPPER & CO'S SANITARY APPLIANCES

Catalogue on application.

THOMAS CRAPPER & CO.
Marlboro' Works,
CHELSEA, LONDON, S.W



Trade advertisement, 1889



CRAPPER'S

Improved
Registered Ornamental
Flush-down W.C.

With New Design Cast-iron Syphon Water
Waste Preventer.

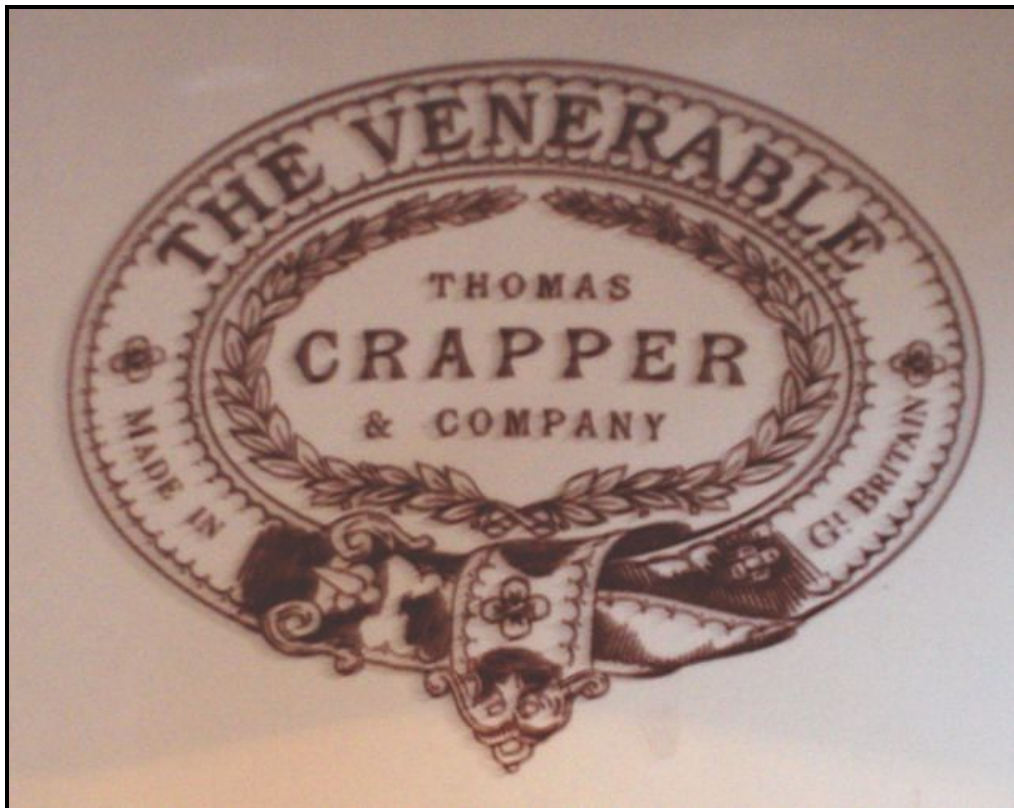
No 518.

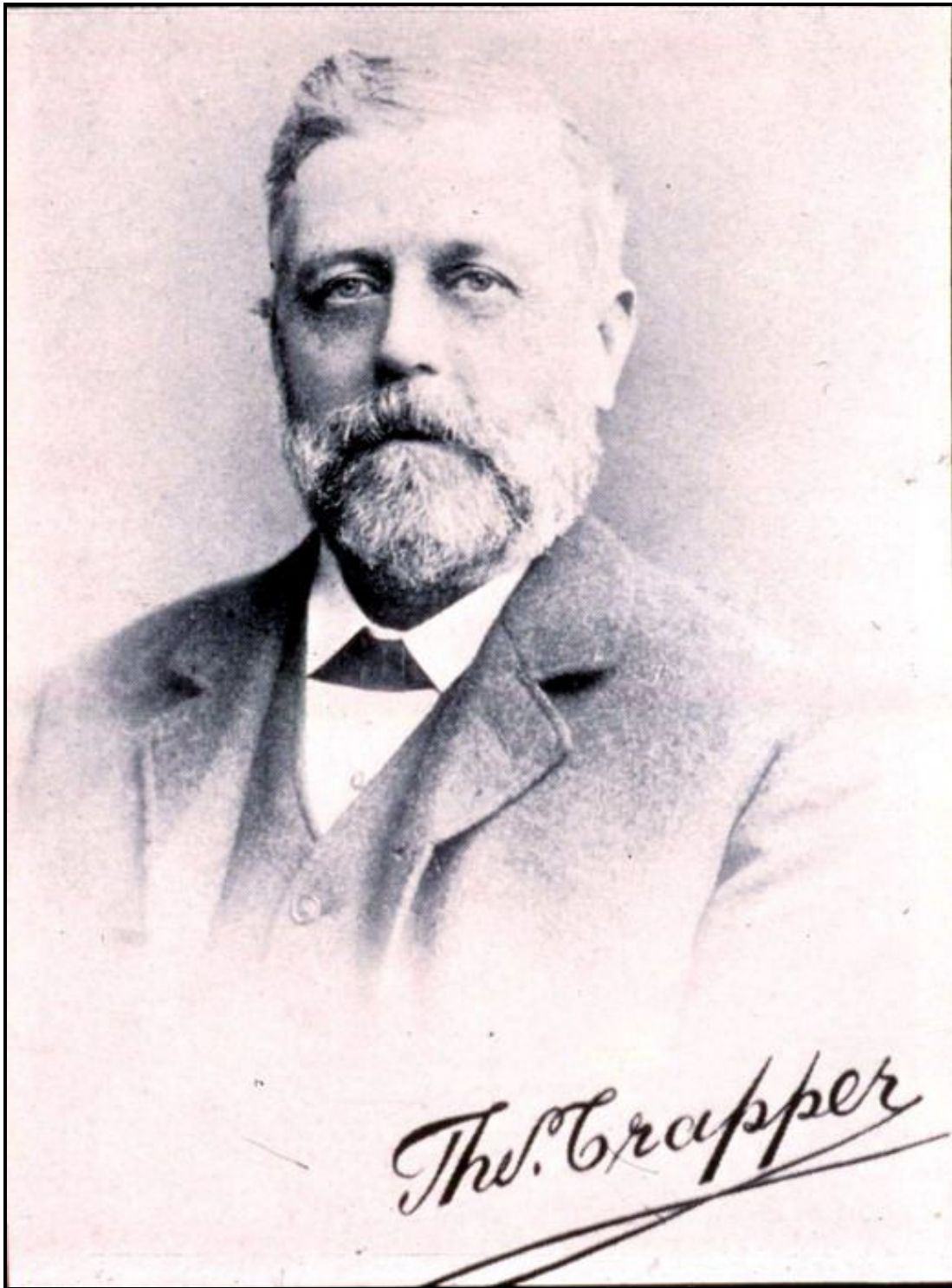
Improved Ornamental Flush-down W.C. Basin
(Registered No. 145,823), Polished Maho-
gany Seat with flap, New Pattern 3-gallon
Cast-iron Syphon Cistern (Rd. No. 149,284),
Brass Flushing Pipe and Clips, and Pendant
Pull, complete as shown £6 15 0

Crapper produced a number of ceramic pedestal closets, including the *Cadogan*, *Chelsea*, *Culford*, *Lennox*, *Mannessa*, *Marlboro*, *Onslow*, *Ovington*, *Sloane* & *Walton* models, the names deriving from Chelsea street names.



Crapper did many practical trials into the design and operation of cisterns, flushing actions, water waste prevention and invented a mains flushing valve, but its use was outlawed by the Metropolitan Water Board.





In the 1880s, the reputation of Thos. Crapper & Co Ltd was such that they were invited to supply the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) with equipment and services at Sandringham House in Norfolk. The plumbing contract included thirty lavatories with cedarwood seats and enclosures, giving Crapper his first Royal Warrant. This led to work at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace.

THOS. CRAPPER & Co., Ltd., *Sanitary Engineers*

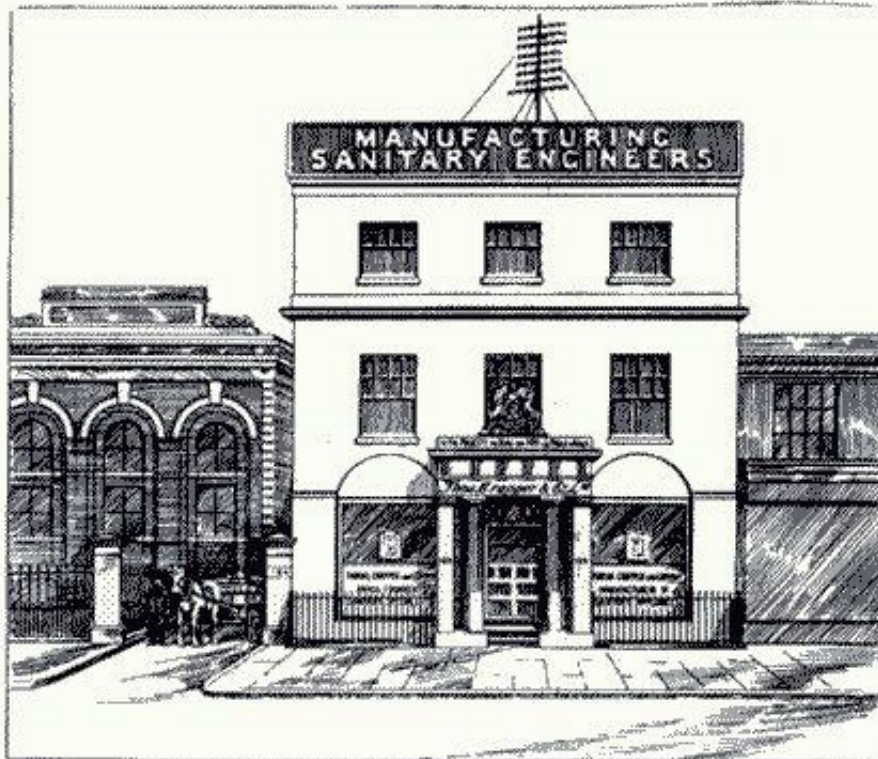


BY APPOINTMENT.

TO
His Majesty the King
AND
H.R.H. The Prince of Wales.



BY APPOINTMENT.



BATHS, LAVATORIES, SINKS, &c.

Show Rooms :

120, KING'S ROAD, CHELSEA, S.W.

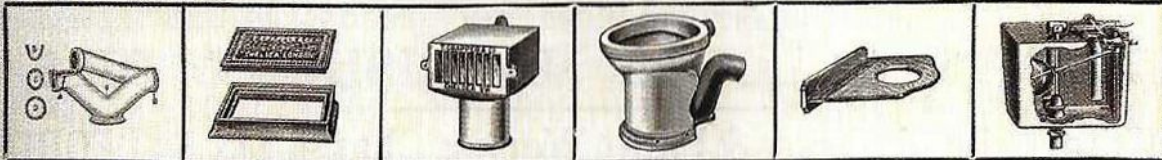
(OPPOSITE ROYAL AVENUE.)

Crapper and Co remained by Royal Appointment to Edward when he became King and was also warranted by George V, as Prince of Wales, and once again as King.

THOMAS CRAPPER & CO., LTD.,

Sanitary Engineers.

By Royal Warrant of Appointment to
 HIS MAJESTY THE KING
 — AND —
 HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES.



50, 52 & 54, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, CHELSEA, LONDON, S.W.



THOS. CRAPPER & Co.,

Ltd.,

Sanitary Engineers

TO
 His Majesty the King
 AND
 H.R.H. The Prince of Wales.

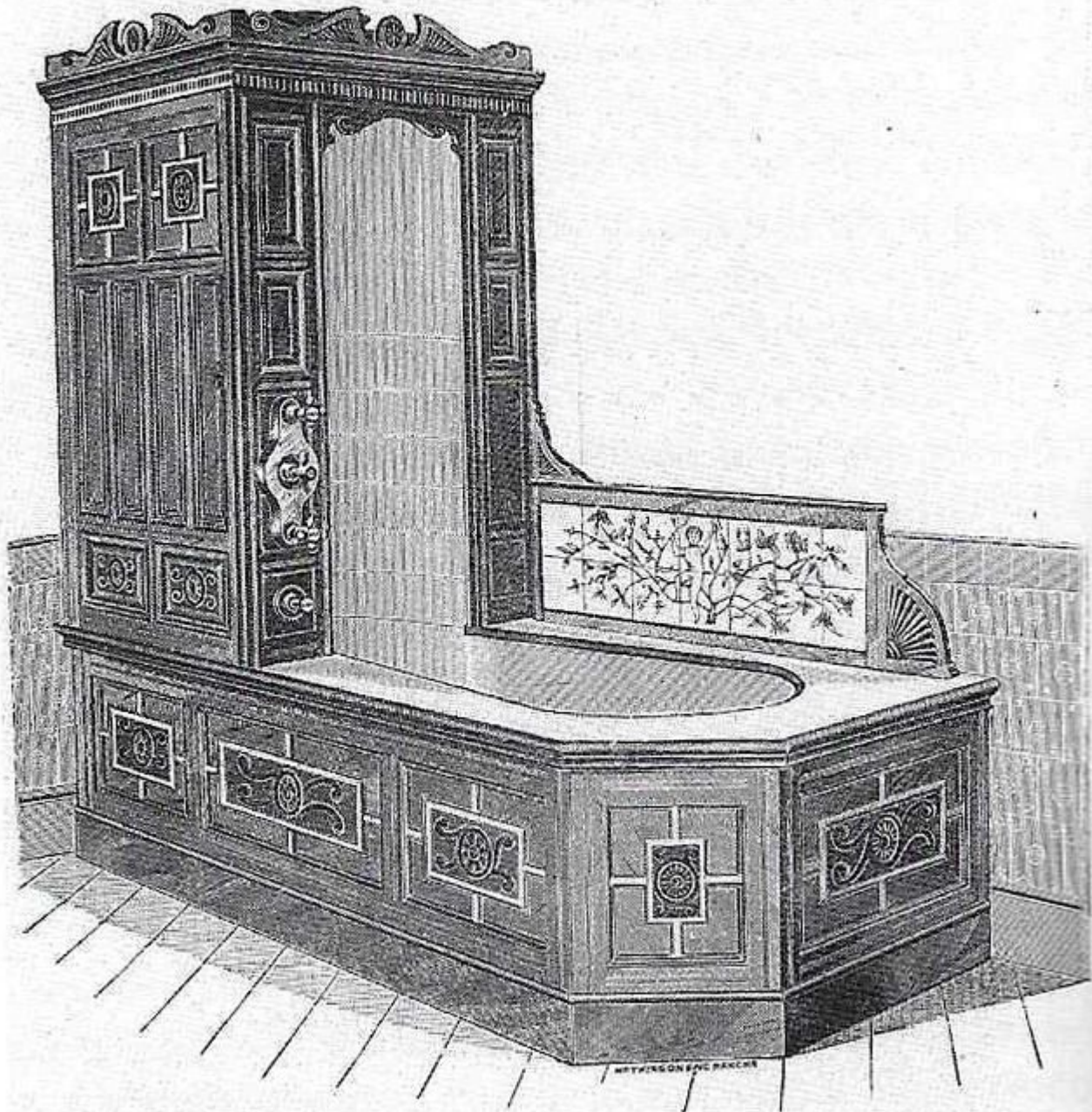


BY APPOINTMENT.

BY APPOINTMENT.

THOMAS CRAPPER & COMPANY, Ltd.

Spray Bath with Enclosure.

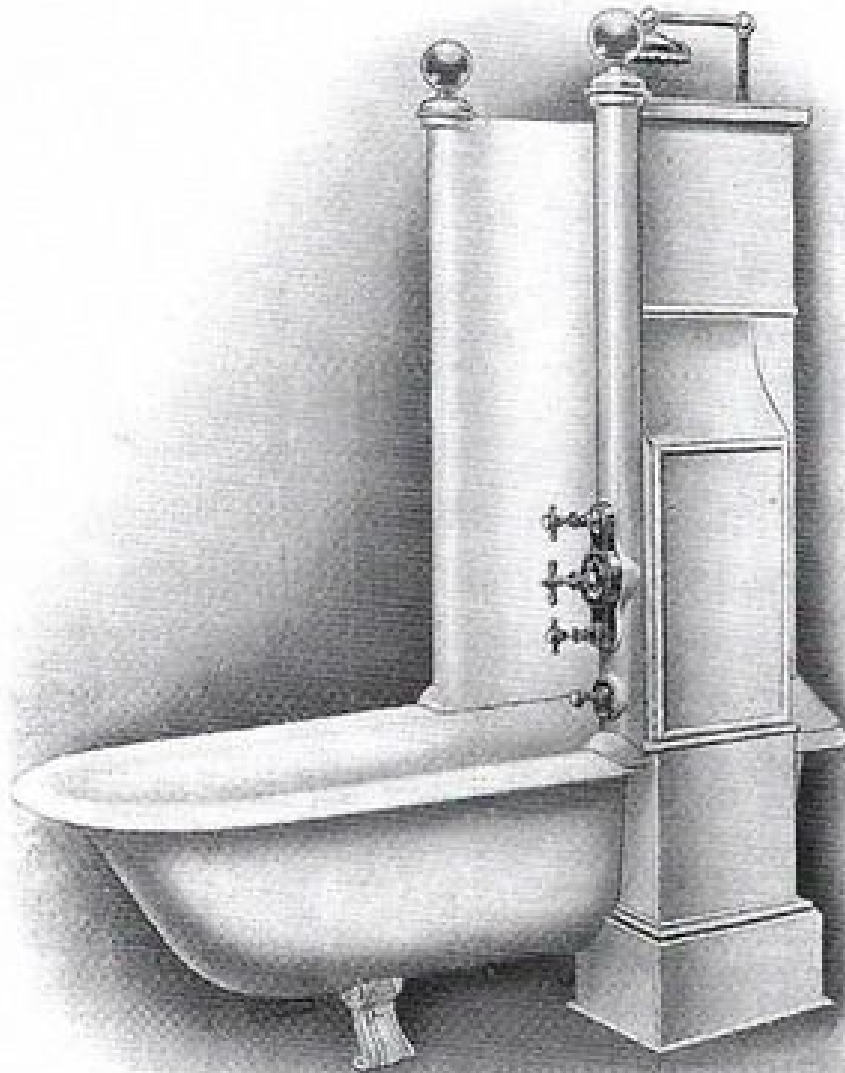


No. 1.

The Company also sold a *Spray Bath with Enclosure* and a *Porcelain Enamelled Cast Iron Canopy Bath*.

THOMAS CRAPPER & COMPANY, Ltd.

Porcelain Enamelled Cast Iron Canopy Bath.



No. 1250.

No. 1250. 5 ft. 6 in. Parallel Bath, Porcelain Enamelled inside, Metallic Enamelled out, 4 in. Roll, with Metallic Enamelled Zinc Canopy as shown, 1 in. Gun Metal Valves for Hot and Cold, with Plunge, Spray and Shower, Pull-up Waste at sides, with Trap. £28 12 6.

Wash Fillings. £1 13 3 extra.

Rising Spray and Jet Fillings. £4 1 9 extra.

Douche Fillings. 1 13 3 ..

Plated Fittings ... 0 12 6 ..

Height over all 7 in. 8 in. Length over all 6 ft. 3 in. Width over all 3 ft.

Can also be supplied reverse hand.

Pedestal Wash-down Closets.

The "DRAYCOTT"

Combination No. 16

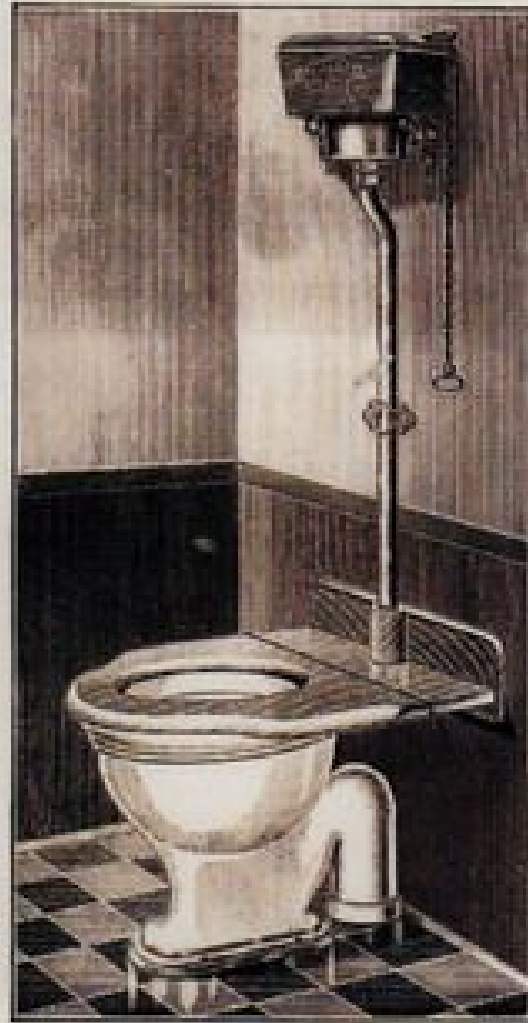


No. 16 Combination, comprising White "Draycott" W.C., with No. 211 Polished Mahogany Seat with Back Board, 2 gallon Painted 219 Water Waste Preventer, with Pull and Iron Brackets

£1 19 9

The "CONDOR"

Combination No. 7



No. 7 Combination, comprising White "Condor" W.C., with No. 211 Plain Deal Hinged Seat with Back Board, Painted 2 gallon "Regent" Water Waste Preventer, with Pull and Iron Brackets

£2 4 0

Case and White Closet 1/2 in.

Telegrams, "CRAPPER, CHELSEA."

Telephone No. 357 Kensington.

THOMAS CRAPPER & CO.,
PATENTEES AND MANUFACTURERS
... OF ...
Sanitary Appliances.

ENGINEERS BY APPOINTMENT TO
His Majesty the King
... AND ...
H.R.H. The Prince of Wales.



MARLBORO' WORKS, CHELSEA, LONDON, S.W.

—*—
Show Rooms and Offices:—
50, 52, & 54 MARLBOROUGH ROAD, CHELSEA, S.W.

CATALOGUE AND PRICE LIST,

MAY, 1902.

(Subject to alterations without notice.)

—*—
ALL PREVIOUS ISSUES CANCELLED.



Sanitary Engineers

By Warrant of Appointment to

Their Late Majesties Edward VII and George V
Both as Princes of Wales and Kings.



MR. ROBERT M. WHARAM.



MR. THOMAS CRAPPER.



MR. GEORGE CRAPPER.

(Late of Marlboro' Works, Marlborough Road,

= = = Chelsea, London, S.W.)

Crappier retired in 1904, passing the firm to his nephew George and his business partner Robert Marr Wharam, and went to live at his house in 12 Thornsett Road, Anerley.

In 1966, the company was sold by the then owner Robert G Wharam to their rivals John Bolding & Sons, who went into liquidation in 1969. The company fell out of use until it was acquired by Robert Kirby (an historian and collector of antique bathroom fittings), who relaunched the company in Stratford-upon-Avon, producing authentic reproductions of Crappier's original Victorian bathroom fittings.

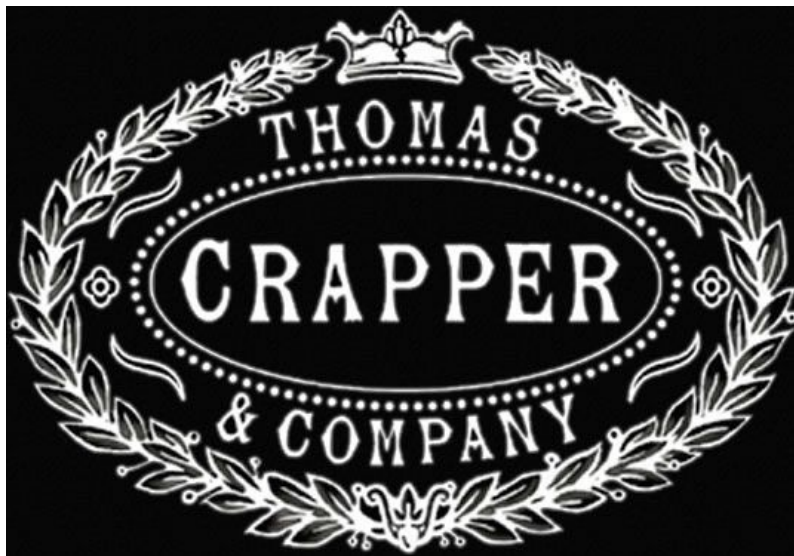
BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1986 *The History of Plumbing: Parts One & Two*, Plumbing & Mechanical, USA, July
- 1988 *The History of Plumbing: Parts Three & Four*, Plumbing & Mechanical, USA, July
- 1993 *The History of Plumbing: Parts 1-8*, Plumbing & Mechanical, USA, June
- 2002 *Bogs, Baths & Basins: The Story of Domestic Sanitation*, David J Eveleigh, Sutton Publishing, Stroud
- 2005 *One Hundred Years of Competence and Commitment: An Illustrated History of the Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering*, Nigel Watson, James & James, London
- 2009 *Flushed with Pride: The Story of Thomas Crapper*, Wallace Reyburn, Polperro Heritage Press, Clifton-upon-Teme, Worcestershire
- *Thomas Crapper*, Wikipedia
- *The History of Thomas Crapper*, Wikipedia

Note: The publication dealing extensively with Thomas Crapper is *Flushed with Pride*

General information and illustrations on water-closets is available in the following:

- 1978 *Temples of Convenience*, Lucinda Lambton, Gordon Fraser, London
- 1995 *Temples of Convenience and Chambers of Delight*, Lucinda Lambton, Pavilion Books, London



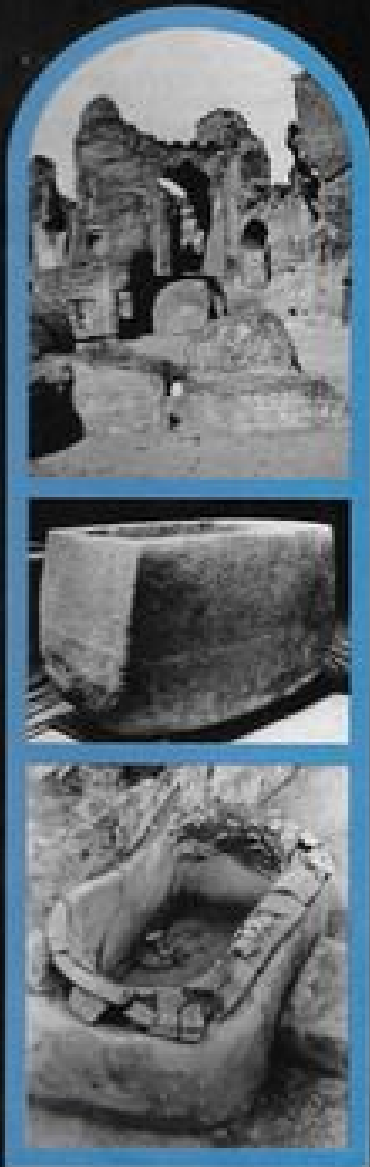
PLUMBING & MECHANICAL

The History Of PLUMBING

Parts One & Two

Bath, England was built by the Romans around 50 a.d. This was once a spa for their military and eventually for the upper class of Bath. Lead piping installed during the Roman occupation is still in working order.

PLUMBING & MECHANICAL



THE HISTORY OF PLUMBING

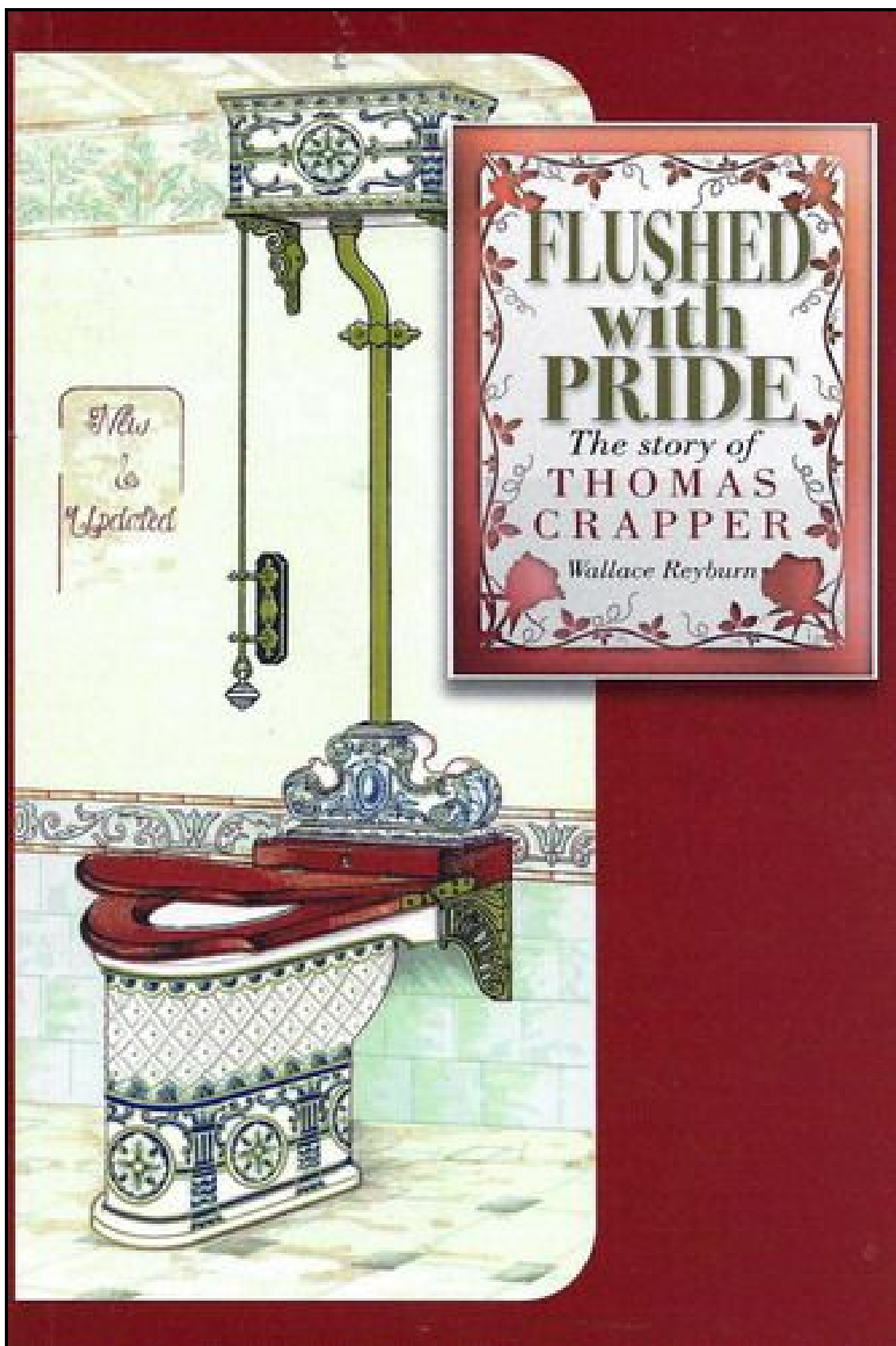
PARTS 3 & 4

PART 3

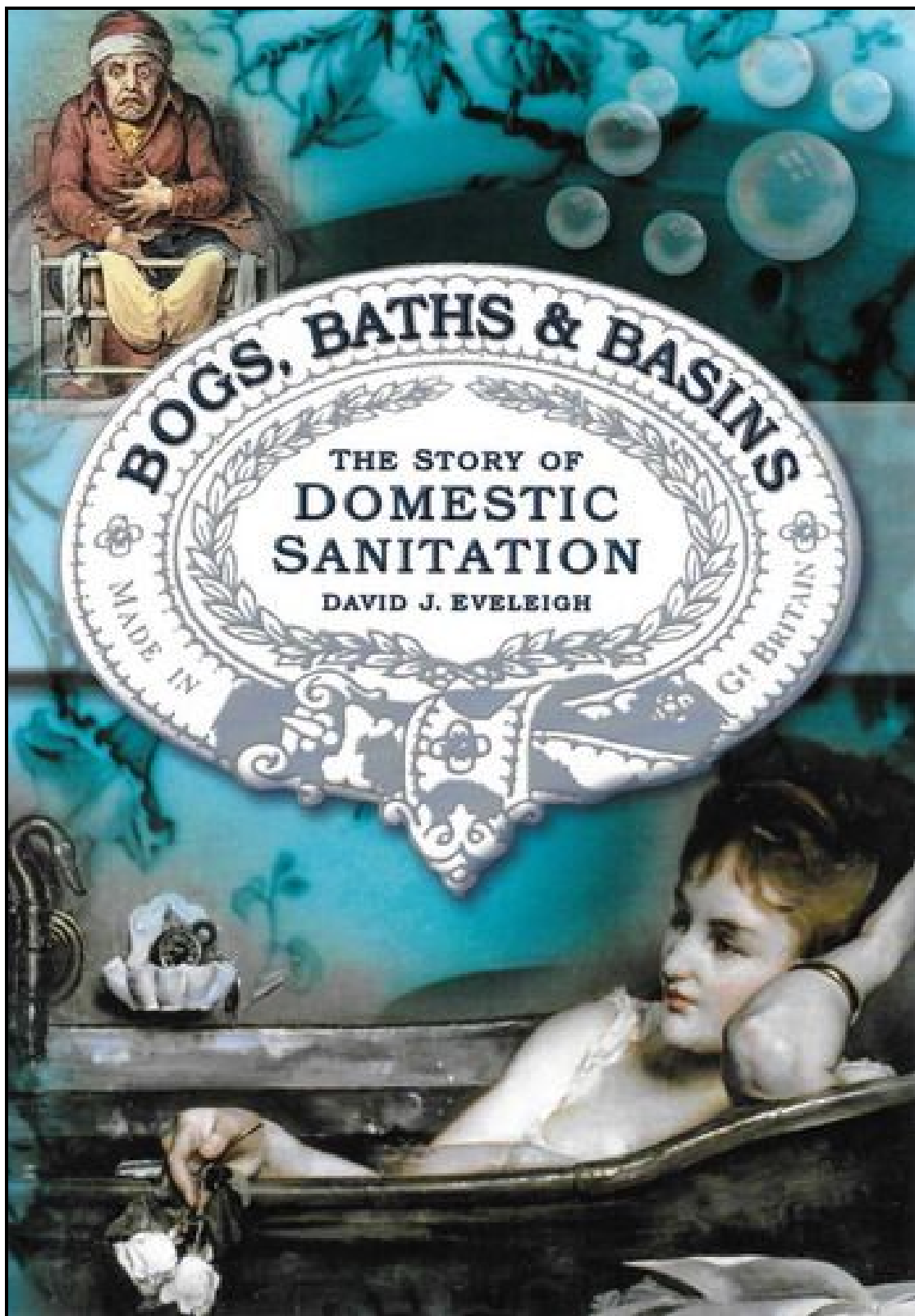
Plagues & Epidemics.....	2
The Sorry State of Medical Science.....	7
The Good Old Days of Plumbing in America.....	10
American Sanitary Plumbing Museum.....	16
Thomas Crapper Through A Scholar's Eyes.....	18

PART 4

Ancient Plumbing.....	22
Babylonia.....	25
Crete.....	27
Egypt.....	28
Greece.....	31
Jerusalem.....	32
Pompeii & Herculaneum.....	35
Toilets Through The Ages.....	37



2009: The cover shows an early Twyford WC and a siphonic cistern
(Crapper had a working relationship with Twyford)



2002

EPILOGUE

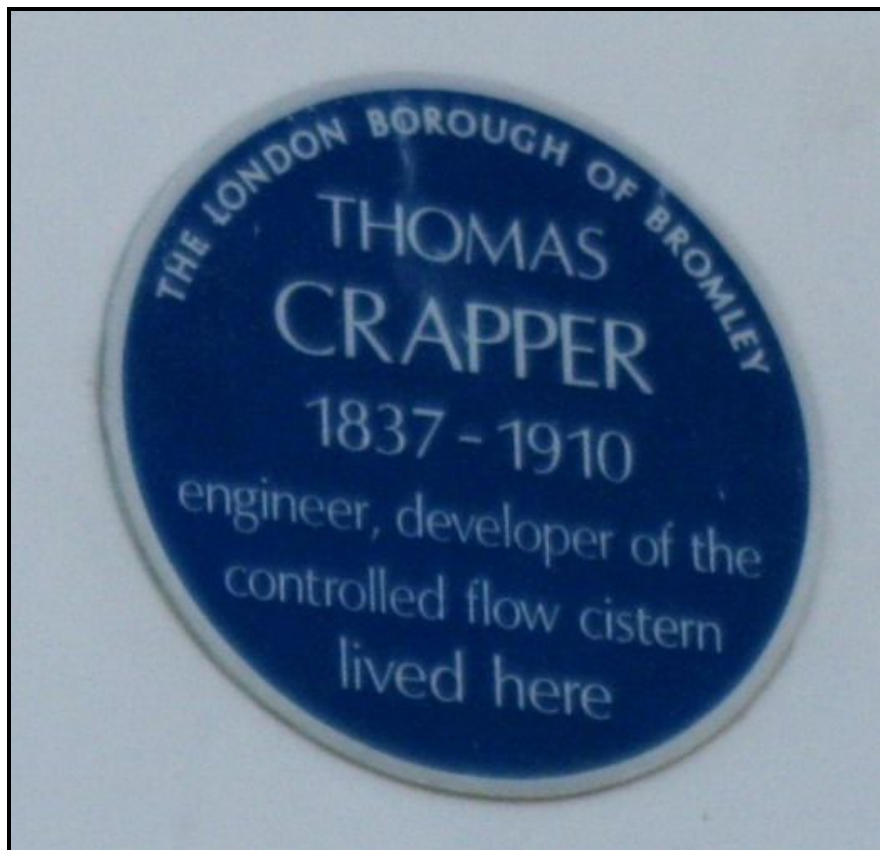
Thomas Crapper died on the 27th January, 1910 in Anerley and was buried in the Elmers End Cemetery (now Beckenham Cemetery).



New memorial grave of Thomas Crapper in Beckenham Cemetery



Collected ledgers and booklets of Thomas Crapper



*Blue Plaque to Thomas Crapper in Thornsett Road
(This gives his date of birth as 1837)*



Today, Westminster Abbey has three Crapper manhole covers, which are popular with brass rubbing enthusiasts.