

He is believed to have been educated in Stafford before moving to London in his teens. He is often described as an ironmonger, but he trained as a linen draper, a trade which came under the Ironmongers' Company.[3] He had a small shop in the upper storey of Thomas Gresham's Royal Bourse or Exchange in Cornhill. In 1614 he had a shop in Fleet Street, two doors west of Chancery Lane in the parish of St Dunstan's.[4] He became verger and churchwarden of the church, and a friend of the vicar, John Donne.[2] He joined the Ironmongers' Company in November 1618.[2]

Walton's first wife was Rachel Floud (married December 1626), a great-great-niece of Archbishop Cranmer. She died in 1640. He soon remarried, to Anne Ken (1646-1662), who appears as the pastoral Kenna of *The Angler's Wish*; she was a stepsister of Thomas Ken, afterwards bishop of Bath and Wells.[1]

After the Royalist defeat at Marston Moor in 1644, Walton retired from his trade. He went to live just north of his birthplace, at a spot between the town of Stafford and the town of Stone, where he had bought some land edged by a small river. His new land at Shallowford [where?] included a farm, and a parcel of land; however by 1650 he was living in Clerkenwell, London.

The first edition of his book *The Compleat Angler* was published in 1653. His second wife died in 1662, and was buried in Worcester Cathedral, where there is a monument to her memory. One of his daughters married Dr Hawkins, a prebendary of Winchester.[1]

The last forty years of his life were spent visiting eminent clergymen and others who enjoyed fishing, compiling the biographies of people he liked, and collecting information for the *Compleat Angler*. After 1662 he found a home at Farnham Castle with George Morley, Bishop of Winchester, to whom he dedicated his *Life of George Herbert* and his biography of Richard Hooker. He sometimes visited Charles Cotton in his fishing house on the Dove.[1]

Walton died in his daughter's house at Winchester on 15 December 1683 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

The *Compleat Angler* -

Main article: *The Compleat Angler*

Viator's bridge near Milldale (Peak District) is named for its reference in *The Compleat Angler*

The *Compleat Angler*[7] was first published in 1653, but Walton continued to add to it for a quarter of a century. It is a celebration of the art and spirit of fishing in prose and verse; 6 verses were quoted from John Dennys's 1613 work *The Secrets of Angling*. It was dedicated to John Offley, his most honoured friend. There was a second edition in 1655, a third in 1661 (identical with that of 1664), a fourth in 1668 and a fifth in 1676. **In this last edition the thirteen chapters of the original had grown to twenty-one, and a second part was added by his friend and brother angler Charles Cotton, who took up Venator where Walton had left him and completed his instruction in fly fishing and the making of flies.**[1]

Walton did not profess to be an expert with a fishing fly; the fly fishing in his first edition was contributed by Thomas Barker, a retired cook and humorist, who produced a treatise of his own in 1659; but in the use of the live worm, the grasshopper and the frog "Piscator" himself could speak as a master. The famous passage about the frog, often misquoted as being about the worm—"use him as though you loved him, that is, harm him as little as you may possibly, that he may live the longer"—appears in the original edition. The additions made as the work grew did not affect the technical part alone; quotations, new turns of phrase, songs, poems and anecdotes were introduced as if the author, who wrote it as a recreation, had kept it constantly in his mind and talked it over point by point with his many friends. There were originally only two interlocutors in the opening scene, "Piscator" and "Viator"; but in the second edition, as if in answer to an objection that "Piscator" had it too much in his own way in praise of angling, he introduced the falconer, "Auceps," changed "Viator" into "Venator" and made the new companions each dilate on the joys of his favourite sport.[1]

The best-known old edition of the *Angler* is J. Major's (2nd ed., 1824). The book was edited by Andrew Lang in 1896, followed by many other editions.[1]

Walton's Lives

Walton also made significant contributions to seventeenth-century life-writing throughout his career. **His leisurely labours as a biographer seem to have grown out of his devotion to angling. It was probably as an angler that he made the acquaintance of Sir Henry Wotton, but it is clear that Walton had more than a love of fishing and a humorous temper to recommend him to the friendship of the accomplished ambassador.** At any rate, Wotton, who had intended to write the life of John Donne, and had already corresponded with Walton on the subject, left the task to him. Walton had already contributed an elegy to the 1633 edition of Donne's poems, and he completed and published the life, much to the satisfaction of the most learned critics, in 1640. Sir Henry Wotton dying in 1639, Walton undertook his life also; it was finished in 1642 and published in 1651 as a preface to the volume *Reliquiae Wottonianae*. His life of Hooker was published in 1665, and his biography of George Herbert in 1670, the latter coinciding with a collected edition of Walton's biographical writings, *The Lives of Dr. John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert* (1670, 1675). His life of Bishop Robert Sanderson appeared in 1678. All these subjects were endeared to the biographer by a certain gentleness of disposition and cheerful piety; three of them at least—Donne, Wotton and Herbert—were anglers. **Walton studied these men's lives in detail, and provides many insights into their character.**[8]



Figure 3 Izaak Walton and his scholar – woodcut by Louis Rhead