

## Charles Cotton (1630 -1687)

Charles Cotton, English writer, angler and friend of Izaak Walton, was born on 28th April 1630 in Beresford Hall, on the Staffordshire, Derbyshire border. His mother was Olive, daughter of Sir John Stanhope of Elvaston, Derbyshire and his father a wealthy landowner with many literary connections.

He was well educated, with a good knowledge of French, Italian as well as the classics, but it is unsure as to whether he went to Cambridge.

In 1656 Cotton married Isobella Hutchinson, daughter of Sir Thomas Hutchinson of Owthorpe, Notts. Two years later his father died, leaving him the considerable estates at Beresford and Bentley. The River Dove flows through Beresford Dale and it is here that he learnt to fly fish and possibly where he met up with Izaak Walton who befriended him for many years.



In 1664 he published a burlesque titled Scarronicles, which became a popular work which ran into 14 editions. He also wrote 'The Wonders of the Peake', a long topographical poem popular in the 18th century. This and his other poetry, published posthumous reflect Cotton's enjoyment of life. He spent a great deal of time fishing with Izaak Walton and together they built a fishing temple on the banks of the River Dove in Beresford Dale near Hartington, bearing the inscription Piscatoribus Sacrum. The temple still stands, on private land.

Two years later he wrote the celebrated second part of Walton's 5th edition of 'The Compleat Angler'. The work was the first detailed treatise on fly-fishing and since its publication has sold more copies than the bible and only been out of print once.

As well as writing novels and poetry Charles Cotton also wrote the world's first guide to gambling (The Compleat Gamester in 1674) and a practical book on arboriculture, in which he was an expert (The Planters Guide in 1675).

Cotton's later years were marred by financial difficulties, his income from his estates and writings being insufficient to support his life style and he had to sell Beresford Hall in 1681.

He died in 1687 and is buried in St James's Church, Piccadilly, London; there is also a family pew in the small church at Alstonefield, Derbyshire.

For more see [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)

*Thanks to [www.derbyshireuk.net](http://www.derbyshireuk.net)*

## Charles Cotton Hotel

The hotel was originally built in the late seventeenth century as a coaching inn and was known as the Bulls Head. During the early 1800's it was acquired by the Sleigh family and renamed the Sleigh Arms; they extended it to its current size in 1864. James Cotson in "On Foot Through The Peaks" (1870) described it as "*a quiet old-fashioned country inn .... in which good old Izaak Walton himself would have delighted to take his ease.*"

By 1905 it had changed its name to The Charles Cotton Hotel and J Firth in "Highways of Derbyshire" was talking about "*an interesting little collection of old prints and portraits of Cotton and Walton*". A travellers guide written in the 1930's also said "*it is a lodestar, which draws fishermen within its walls. In the dining room are mementoes of that prince of anglers, Charles Cotton, including portraits and verses written in his own hand.*" Unfortunately all of these mementoes are no longer at the Hotel.



Richard and Emma Gould, shown in the photograph, took over from Mr J. Gretton as the landlord and landlady of the Charles Cotton Hotel in March 1917 and stayed for 27 years until 1944. This was the longest period of continuous ownership in the hotels history.

The Hotel was purchased in November 2006 by Ray & Carolyn Cork and has been restored to its previous glory.