

The Aylesbury Club and the Duck Dinner

The Duck Dinner is held in Aylesbury each year by the Aylesbury Club, which was originally formed in 1810. Its objects then were "good cheer, good humour and good neighbourhood", and its members met each month on the Friday nearest to the full moon during the period from November to April. Apparently the dining sometimes got out of hand; it is reported that on 21st January, 1832 an inquest was held in respect of one Robert Brazil, who died as a result of choking on stewed beef which he had been "eating voraciously" at Judkins Bakehouse".

The club continued into the 1950's; the Bucks Herald recording in September 1954 that the author Sir Compton Mackenzie proposed the toast at the Bulls Head in Aylesbury and that the ducks were provided by the British Oil and Cake Mills demonstration farm at Stoke Mandeville. After this time the club seems to have faded away. However in 1973 Maurice Buckingham, the then Mayor of Aylesbury, reconstituted the club with the same laudable objects, and it is now as strong as ever, although its members are now more temperate.

The Club's only *raison d'être* apart from the above objects is to continue the tradition of the annual duck dinner, and the Club and its members hope that all its guests will enjoy tonight's dinner.

The Aylesbury Duck

From Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management, by
Isabella Beeton, 1861 - Recipes - Chapter 21- Birds

THE AYLESBURY DUCK.--The white Aylesbury duck is, and deservedly, a universal favourite. Its snowy plumage and comfortable comportment make it a credit to the poultry-yard, while its broad and deep breast, and its ample back, convey the assurance that your satisfaction will not cease at its death. In parts of Buckinghamshire, this member of the duck family is bred on an extensive scale; not on plains and commons, however, as might be naturally imagined, but in the abodes of the cottagers. Round the walls of the living-rooms, and of the bedroom even, are fixed rows of wooden boxes, lined with hay; and it is the business of the wife and children to nurse and comfort the feathered lodgers, to feed the little ducklings, and to take the old ones out for an airing. Sometimes the "stock" ducks are the cottager's own property, but it more frequently happens that they are intrusted to his care by a wholesale breeder, who pays him so much *per* score for all ducklings properly raised. To be perfect, the Aylesbury duck should be plump, pure white, with yellow feet, and a flesh-coloured beak.