

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.

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. 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.

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.

Extract from Bradshaw's Handbook for Tourists (Bradshaw's Guide) 1866

The church (in a large church yard) is a decorated English cross, with a low tower, overlooking the vale, and seen from most parts of it. There is a carved pulpit, and tombs of the Lees of Quarendon, an ancient seat, 2 miles north. The vicarage is on the site of a monastery to St. Osyth, who was born here. She was martyred, and gives name to Size Lane, London.

Lace and straw plait are made here; but another manufacture peculiar to the town is ducklings, which are forced for the Christmas market. The ducks are kept from laying till about October or November, when they are fed with abundance of stimulating food, and hens employed to sit on the eggs. The Young brood being hatched are nursed with great care, opposite a fire, and fetch 15s. or 20s. a couple at Christmas. As many as three quarters of a million ducks are sent to London from this part.

Within a few miles are several seats. Hartwell that of Dr. Lee was, in the late war, the residence of Louis XVIII and his family. Wootton, belonging to the Duke of Buckingham, has been in that family (the Grenville) since the Conquest. Weedon is the Duke of Marlborough's. Lillies was the seat of the, late Lord Nugent (a Grenville). Further off, on the Banbury Road, is Wootton Underwood, consecrated to the memory of Cowper, who lived, here with his cousin, Lady Hesketh, near the Throckmorton's old seat. The poet's house is standing. It was while living here, at the close of his life, that he produced his Homer (1791).