

History of the Tufted Duck and Tring

Our pub was built in 1901 by the Rothschild family and designed by local architect William Huckvale. The structure was originally used for other purposes on the estate before being transformed into a pub / restaurant in 2007 and named the Akeman after the Roman road that it sits on. The restoration carefully preserved the building's distinctive Victorian façade and original interior features, like the classic fireplace in the bar area.



The Rothschild family was an extraordinarily wealthy European banking dynasty that rose to prominence in the late 18th century, ultimately reshaping international finance and the local history of Hertfordshire. Founded by Mayer Amschel Rothschild in Frankfurt, the family expanded across Europe by sending his five sons to key financial hubs, including London and Paris.



The family's profound local impact on Tring began in 1872 when Baron Lionel de Rothschild purchased the Tring Park estate for his son, Nathaniel "Natty" Rothschild (pictured left, who became the first Jewish peer in the House of Lords).

The family essentially rebuilt the town, using their estate architect William Huckvale to create a distinct regional style characterised by timber framing, steep roofs, and ornate brick chimneys.

Natty Rothschild heavily modified Tring Park Mansion, originally designed by Sir Christopher Wren, remodelling it into a grand French Renaissance-style residence. It is now home to the Tring Park School for the Performing Arts.



Tring Park Mansion

The family commissioned numerous structures, including the mock-Tudor building that is now the Tufted Duck, the Rose & Crown Inn (rebuilt in 1905), and hundreds of high-quality worker cottages to replace decaying town properties.

Natty's eldest son, Walter Rothschild, had little interest in banking and instead dedicated his life to natural history. He famously kept exotic animals, including zebras, kangaroos, emus, and giant tortoises, roaming free around Tring Park.



Lord Walter Rothschild's carriage drawn by zebras

For Walter's 21st birthday in 1889, his father built him a museum to house his massive collection of specimens. Walter later gifted it to the nation, and today it operates as the world-renowned Natural History Museum at Tring (well worth a visit and a stones throw away from us – with a good arm!)



When we acquired the pub, we renamed it The Tufted Duck. This bird is one of the main species found at our local Tring reservoirs, and it features prominently in the wonderful collection built up by Lord Walter at the Tring Natural History Museum.

The Rothschild family established a miniature welfare system for local residents. They provided a local cottage hospital, a dedicated nursing service, public allotments, and recreation grounds. Furthermore, they constructed the town's very first council houses and funded a public sewage works and isolating hospital.

The family's direct ownership of the estate ended just before World War II in 1938. The land was broken up and sold, though the mansion was briefly used to safely store precious London bank documents during the war.

Tring Ancient History

Way before the Rothschilds, Tring's Roman history is fundamentally tied to its strategic location, lying on the edge of the Chilterns where the ancient Icknield Way crossed the important Roman road of Akeman Street.

Akeman Street ran from St Albans to Cirencester, serving as a major artery, and the town developed significantly as a direct result.

Just a couple of miles outside Tring lies Cow Roast, a substantial Romano-British settlement and designated Roman town. Archaeological excavations, which began in 1972, have revealed that this was a thriving commercial and industrial hub. Archaeologists recovered a variety of Romano-British pottery, brooches, and coins – including a remarkable coin depicting the fable of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf. These fascinating artifacts have been returned to the local area and can be viewed at the Tring Local History Museum.



The 'Tring tiles'

During the Roman occupation of Britain, Tring itself served as a vital agricultural storage site and trading post for the large rural population living along the Icknield Way.

The Romans left Tring around 410 AD when Roman rule in Britain collapsed.

Fast forward to 1086 AD, when the Domesday Book was compiled by order of William the Conqueror. In the survey, Tring is recorded under the name Treung as a prominent manor and the administrative centre of its own 'hundred', demonstrating that it has long been a highly historic region.