

So, why the Orange Tree?



When we began looking for an East Herts/West Essex pub, we were told about The Three Horseshoes. Whilst we liked the pub, location and surroundings we found that it was one of several "Three Horseshoes" in the area and could immediately see scope for confusion. This theory was borne out when we conducted our own research in the village by asking passers-by for directions to "the Three Horseshoes in Sawbridgeworth" and an overwhelming majority guided us to the wrong ones.

We saw this as a issue and told the brewery, McMullens, that whilst we were keen on the pub we wanted a change of name. Naturally it is rare for a brewery to agree to rename a pub and we experienced some resistance (McMullens had changed only one pub name in over 185 years) but with the backing of Board Director Fergus McMullen approval was finally granted.

And so began the search for a suitable new name and countless hours in the local and county libraries and speaking to local groups and historians followed as we researched the town's rich history and former inhabitants.

Then we came across a marvellous story involving the Rivers family, former proprietors of Rivers Nursery, which for many years was a leading authority on fruit growing in the UK with communication between Rivers and Charles Darwin apparently a regular occurrence.

In 1876 when the Florida Orange crop failed the industry found itself in jeopardy and a genus of Orange Tree named "Rivers Late" (these days known as Valencia Late) was exported from the Nursery to re-establish the Orange industry across the pond. Imagine that....a British business, in THIS area, being the salvation of the world famous Florida Orange!

The Rivers Nursery closed some years back and much of the land was developed to make way for the new Rivers Hospital complex. Part of the orchard still remains, courtesy of East Herts Council and a hard working group of volunteers who maintain the area and its trees. The group were happy to confirm the authenticity of the Florida Orange story and so we had our name and The Orange Tree at Sawbridgeworth was born.

For more details about the Rivers Orchard and how to get involved in its upkeep and events go to <http://riversnurseryorchard.org.uk>

Or obtain a copy of Elizabeth Waugh's history of Rivers Nursery of Sawbridgeworth: The Art of Practical Pomology - available from the Rivers Nursery and Orchard Group - details at the above link.