

## 2025 - A year of special events :

### 25 January 2025

Wassail in the Orchard and a new Wassail Song

### 26 April 2025

Celebration Day in High Wych Village Hall with talks and walks in the Orchard : Eventbrite booking

### From April 2025

Discover the Rivers Orchard House and fruit trees at Audley End House and Gardens

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

### May, 2025

Art competition for adults : submissions. Prize giving and display in Council Chamber in July 2025

### September/October 2025

Apple Day

### October 2025

Art competition for children : submissions. Prize giving and display in Council Chamber in November 2025

300th Anniversary tree planting in the Orchard : 6 newly planted Rivers plum cultivars including Czar (see below)



QR code for dedicated Rivers 300 website



Czar Plum,  
Rivers Cultivar 1874

[rhs.co.uk/300years](http://rhs.co.uk/300years)

## Key Dates in Rivers Nursery History

### 1725 Founding of business

John Rivers comes to Bonks Hill, Sawbridgeworth.

### 18th c Expansion

A succession of Rivers family directors acquire land. Rose growing is an early specialism.

### 19th c Renown and Prosperity

The third Thomas Rivers, 1797 - 1877, develops new fruit cultivars and methods of cultivation, writes popular handbooks, corresponds with Darwin and sends oranges to California.

### End 19th c - early 20th c Continuing expansion

Thomas Francis Rivers expands the business to 300 acres and 200 employees. The Conference Pear is launched - nowadays it is sold from Europe to Japan.

### 20th c Company decline and close

The last Thomas Rivers contends with the effects of two world wars and a great change in life styles. After his death in 1978, the land is sold to build a hospital and housing.

## Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard

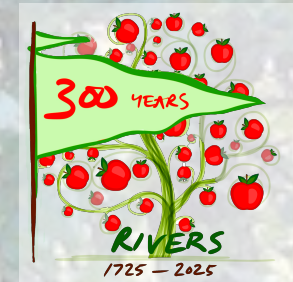
### 1991 to Present Day Establishment of a Community Orchard

A group of overgrown Rivers fruit trees is discovered by two Countryside Management rangers. Many volunteers over the years clear the land and replant lost varieties. Now a thriving orchard, it is also a wildlife site and a reminder of Sawbridgeworth's rural heritage.

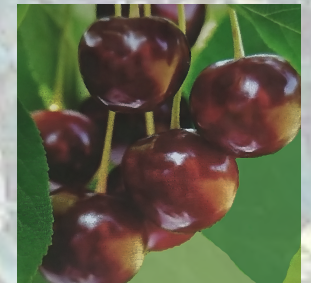
The aim is to maintain, develop and protect the Orchard for the future.

# RIVERS HERITAGE SITE & ORCHARD

is celebrating 300 years  
since the founding of  
Rivers Nursery, 1725 - 2025



Conference pear, Rivers cultivar 1885



Early Rivers cherry, Rivers cultivar 1850



Early Rivers plum, Rivers cultivar 1834



Thomas Rivers apple, Rivers cultivar 1897

# RIVERS HERITAGE SITE & ORCHARD



**KEY**  
Blue Line :  
Perimeter of Site  
Yellow Line :  
Perimeter of Present  
Day Orchard



Watercolours of apples and cherries by May Rivers