

Cholderton Estate - Family History

Henry Charles Stephens (1841 – 1918) was a remarkable man, even by the standards of a time that many see as the Golden Age of British Intellectual, scientific and creative achievement. He is most famous as the proprietor of the ink business that still bears the family name. He was also a chemist and MP - he held the Finchley seat from 1887 until 1900. He began to assemble Estate at Cholderton in the 1880s, which allowed him to develop his multiple interests in arable agriculture, aboriculture, architecture and in breeding purebred stock.

When Henry Charles Stephens died in 1918, his London residence Avenue House in Finchley and its gardens were bequeathed to the people of Finchley and to this day remain a local amenity. The Cholderton Estate was taken over by his grandson, Captain Lewis Edmunds. What Captain Edmunds inherited was a model of Victorian advanced farming, along with such features as a walled garden complete with an elaborate series of ponds especially built to display aquatic plants of many sorts.

Captain Edmunds died in 1975 and the Estate was taken over by his son, the present owner, Henry Edmunds. Despite the burden of UK Inheritance Tax, which resulted in the sale of a part of the estate, Henry has been able to maintain and protect much of what makes Cholderton special including the Hampshire Down sheep and the Cleveland Bay horses which were introduced by his great grandfather.

Henry has had a lifetime interest in natural history and he has been able to put this into practice in his management of the Estate where modern farming methods coexist with the protection of habitats and the active conservation of plants and wildlife. In 2009 Henry was accepted as a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society.