

**BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
STONDON MASSEY**

LITTLE MYLES

Grid Ref: TL568 016

A romantic naturalistic three acre garden developed in the past forty years: open to the public for charitable events

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Morant in his 1768 *Histories and Antiquities of Essex* says that “Milles first occurs as the name of the estate at the Inquisition following the death of Andrew Prior in June 1507”. However the Reverend Reeve in his early twentieth century book *Stondon Massey* writes that ‘a much earlier appearance has now to be chronicled for in a Deed of 1344 mentions is made of a messuage and six acres of land in Kelvedon ‘lying between the land of Milo de Mounteney on either side, and abutting the King’s Way leading from the Bridge of Langeforth up to Kelvedon Hatch’. The estate became of considerable importance with a noble park and mansion known as Great Myles in Kelvedon Hatch while Little Myles in Stondon became the home and dairy farm.

Little Myles was a working farm on the Great Myles estate. In about 1700 there was a very small house there, with a fourteen acre holding attached to it, but during the eighteenth century the house and the farm were both greatly enlarged. The present building is of two stories, roughcast, with a tiled roof, and plain brick chimneys. In general appearance it is of the 18th century but it probably incorporates parts of the previous building at the back.

The late seventeenth century estate map of ‘Miles’s’ includes the field names around Little Myles and names Richard Norris as the tenant. Miles Wood is depicted on this map and later was renamed Menagerie Wood as it had a one acre enclosure for pheasants (Cowan). The 1800 map of Kelvedon Hatch showing ‘Myles’s lands belonging to Francis Fane, Esq.’ and surveyed by William Moore gives the estate acreage as 230. The 1838 tithe award for Little Myles gives the owner as John Fane, Esq. with the homestead covering just over an acre. The garden, hoppet, wood plantation, little waterhouse mead, great waterhouse mead, waterhouse, and the lane covered just over ten acres.

In the Reverend E. H. L. Reeve’s early twentieth century book *Stondon Massey* Little Myles is described as becoming ‘a thoroughly serviceable Home and Dairy Farm and contains fifty-three acres’. In October 1962 the public footpath commencing at the entrance of Little Myles farmyard, and running south-westerly, was diverted to commence to the west of Little Myles farmyard in the north-eastern corner.

Judy Cowan and her husband moved to the older half of little Myles after their marriage in 1973: the older half dates back to the mid-1600s when it and the surrounding farmland formed part of the Great Myles estate. Judy was born at Great Myles, her parents having bought what remained of the mansion

following its demolition in 1946. In 1973 the Little Myles garden consisted of a small rectangular lawn and a year later Judy and her husband were allowed to extend the garden to include a rough area of ground alongside the Dutch barn. This was laid to lawn, a weeping willow tree was planted, and a round bed and small pond created. Several years later another piece of land was acquired from the farm, mainly as a vegetable plot. By the mid 1980s more improvements to the garden had been made with the erection of a summerhouse and a rectangular rose garden. have developed the gardens since the 1970s. By 1988 the 17th century timber structure of Little Myles was showing signs of movement and major building work was necessary. Judy and her husband were able to negotiate to become the owners of the whole of Little Myles Farmhouse. Judy has been responsible for the evolution of the three acre garden. A large pond was dug out in 1988, with a bridge leading to willow island, although the willow has since been felled. A wild garden, woodland garden, and wild flower meadow have been created, as well as an Italian knot garden, a herb garden, an Asian garden, a slate garden, and magnificent ornamental vegetable patches, separated by a hornbeam pergola. More recent additions are the beach garden and prairie border. The herb garden was created in 1991 and has been the inspiration behind Judy Cowan's herbal cosmetic business. The gardens are regularly opened to the public to raise funds for charity.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM & SETTING

Little Myles is about one and a half miles south-east of Chipping Ongar and about four and a half miles north-west of Brentwood. Stondon Massey is one of the smallest parishes in the Brentwood, having an area of 1,127 acres. In shape it is roughly like a reversed L, of which the short arm lies along a ridge about 300 ft. high above the Roding and the long arm extends north-west down to the river, containing the valley of a small stream which flows into the river near Hallsford Bridge, and also a spur extending north-west from the left bank of the stream.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Little Myles is approached from the Ongar Road in Stondon Massey. It is sited 400 metres to the west of Stondon Church on the opposite side of the road. A gravel drive leads from the road to the house and continues around the house to an area of barns.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

Little Myles is a Grade II listed house of the c1500, c1560, C17, c1800 and C20. It is timber-framed, rendered with pebble dash, also brick, roofs peg-tiled. T-plan. In general appearance it is of the 18th century but it probably incorporates parts of the previous building at the back.

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Cowan, Judy 1984 *Kelvedon Hatch Our Village Past and Present*

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Cowan, Judy 1988 *A Potted History of Little Myles Garden*
Cowan, Judy 2016 Little Myles information sheet and plan
Morant, P 1768 *Histories and Antiquities of Essex*
Reeve, Rev. E.H.L. c1914 *Stondon Massey, Essex*

Maps and Images

1777 Chapman & André Map of Essex Plate XVII
1800 Map of Kelvedon Hatch Essex Record Office D/DFA P6
1893-96 2nd edition 25" to the mile ordnance survey map sheet L1 14

Archival Items

1771 Account of John Luther and Richard Woods Essex Record Office D/DFa E43/32
1778 Highway Diversion at Kelvedon Hatch Essex Record Office D/DFa E43/38

Websites

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