



Number two of a series of short walks around Stowe by Chartley this walk is a 1.2km walk through fields and along lanes. There are two stiles on the route. The route goes over an old

gypsum mine which closed down in 1955 after three men were drowned in the workings. Gypsum is widely mined and is typically used as a fertilizer and as the main constituent in many forms of plaster, blackboard chalk and wallboard. The deposit is the end of a seam that runs from Fould. To mark the Millennium the children of the Parish were given medallions mounted on pieces of alabaster, a hard form of gypsum. The softer gypsum at this site was blown out of the seams by explosives. The lumps of gypsum were then loaded into pit trucks and pushed along the narrow rail tracks to the bottom of the shaft where the trucks were loaded into the cage and taken up over 200ft to the surface. The trucks were then pushed on rail tracks to a stone crusher where the gypsum was crushed into powder and bagged up. The fine gypsum was used for dental plaster, plaster of Paris and cement. The impure gypsum was used in coal mines. It was spread on the floor of mines to reduce the risk of explosion or fire. The temperature in the mine was a constant 52 degrees. Water collected in a large sump at the bottom of the shaft and was pumped out into a stream at night

For more ambitious walkers there is a series of longer walks in the Parish.

The Drointon Walk takes in the high ground above the Parish as well as parts of Hixon.

The Stowe Walk includes the site of a former gypsum mine.

The Fradswell Walk crosses and recrosses the Chartley Estate.

The Chartley Walk takes in a sweep of Chartley Estate and follows a bridleway back to Stowe.

There is also a Heritage Walk leaflet which gives some notes on the history of Stowe Village.

Copies of this leaflet are available to download from the Parish Council's website www.stowe-by-chartley-pc.gov.uk

The Gypsum Walk

**STOWE BY CHARTLEY
PARISH COUNCIL**

The walk starts from an informal layby in Drointon Lane, Stowe by Chartley. Postcode ST18 0LD. Please do not block the gate access when parking. A gate at the rear of the layby gives access to a track. This is not a public right of way. Climb the stile to the right of the gate and turn immediately to

bridleway at the waymarker. The shaft and mine workings used to be in the area on your left. For the next quarter of a kilometer there is a labyrinth of mine workings 200ft below you. From the waymarker make for a bridle gate to the left of the track.

Coming up to an area known as The Broadmore there is a road junction. To the left is Broadmore House. Although part of the house has earlier origins it was greatly extended and adapted in 1899, towards the end of the Victorian era. The style of the house is more reflective of Edwardian architecture. Used as the officers mess for the RAF



the right along the hedge line. Follow the hedge until you reach a stile in the field corner. Climb the hedge and head for the left hand side of a large barn ahead of you. You will pass by a big pond populated by waterbirds such as mallards, coots and moorhens. As you approach the barn you are walking over old, unmapped, gypsum workings and pieces of the mineral can be seen on the ground. Turn right at the end of the barn to meet a

Take care coming out on to the lane and turn to your right. The entrance to Normanswood Farm is on your right. During the 2nd World War the farm was owned by Mr. Marston, the brewery owner, but it was named after a Major Norman Ratcliff. On your left is the small watercourse that took the water pumped out of the mine into Bourne Brook.

stationed at Hixon during the second world war and before it has a spell as a boys prep school, the house still retains its period features and considerable grandeur. At this road junction turn right – signposted Stowe. The tree shaded lane bears round to the left past Chartley Chucks, breeders of National Show winning Large and Bantam Chickens. A wayside servery offers a range of unusual eggs for sale. From here it's a short step back to the start.