

Memories of illegal park picnic spot

MOVES by the National Trust to open up Woodchester Park to tourists have awakened memories for South Gloucestershire people who used to use the park as an illegal picnic spot.

The park, which is in an almost inaccessible valley, has never been open to the public although recently visitors have been able to view the mansion house.

But 83-year-old Muriel Wykes says she remembers many happy picnics taking place there when she and groups of friends would trespass into the grounds.

Treasure

Responding to an article in the Citizen highlighting the possible threat to three beech trees at Nymphsfield, Mrs Wykes said she believes the park could still remain an unspoilt national treasure if development was handled carefully.

"I hate what is happening to the country where woods and countryside are closed to the public and hedgerows are destroyed," she said.

"So I am very keen to see the park opened to the public as long as it is done properly."

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"The thought of destroying trees to develop car parks actually on the site outrages me, but I'm sure there must be a way of developing the park sensitively."

Mrs Wykes and her companions would walk from Stonehouse through Leonard Stanley and along the road by Selsley Common into the valley.

They regularly held picnics at the mansion house and didn't regard their outings as illegal incursions into private property.

"I worked in Boots Library at Stroud at the time and remember asking one gentleman if he knew the park because we used to have such good times there," she said.

"He told me he certainly did know the park because he was the solicitor acting for the Woodchester Park Trust and said we had no right to be there."



■ Picnic time at Woodchester Park from a photograph taken at Easter in 1932.