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Miss Ethel Crickmay, founder of 'Our Dumb Friends League', with the original Jack the trace horse c. 1909

Getting up that Hill

As New Wimbledon grew, more traffic travelled up Wimbledon Hill to the Village. At the time, local travel was still mostly by horse and carriage. Animal lover, Miss Ethel Crickmay, was troubled deeply by the suffering of horses pulling heavy loads uphill.

Ethel established a charity that raised money to buy a shire horse, bred for farming and industry. From 1908 to 1939, 'Jack the trace horse' waited at the end of Woodside, opposite Wimbledon High School. He made 20-25 journeys per day, pulling loads of up to two tons.

The council refused to contribute funds, so the charity paid for Jack's food and shoes. Jack became a much-loved character in Wimbledon life; he won merit badges at the Wimbledon Horse Parade in 1913 and first prize at the Regents Park Cart Horse Show in 1923. Each successive horse the charity bought was also named Jack.

Jack the trace horse and the local horsebus, Wimbledon Hill Road

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