



THE CATWORK YEAR

2015



The Catwork Year 2015

Jasper

Our front cover cat this year

Jasper had a lucky escape from the multi-cat household of which he was the only FIV when friend Mary, who works at RSPCA in Wales and knows their destruction policy for FIVs, got Jasper signed over to herself and brought him to Catwork in 2006.

Here Jasper has had a long healthy life, even surviving a stroke in 2015, and bouncing back.

We estimate he is about 14-15 years old and a worthy candidate for this year's front cover.

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2016, and time to report and reflect on the happenings at Catwork during 2015.

It was a difficult year for us emotionally, in which we lost three of our beloved house cats as well as, inevitably, some older FIVs and the last of our leukaemia cats.

We continued to fight for FIVs wherever and whenever we could; we added to our database on health histories of FIVs worldwide (1,000 FIV cats project); sent out many more of our FIV books, now on its fourth print run, and answered emails on FIV issues and talked to people on the phone hoping to allay whatever fears owners had about FIV.

During this difficult year we felt extremely grateful for all the support we received. Our rescue work down the years has put us in touch with many wonderful people whom we feel privileged to call friends.

Early in the year we were back at the Pet Oscars event at the hospital, this time on the panel of judges as a result of our being the owners of brave little Plucky who won Pet of the Year the previous year (2013).

The event gave us an even greater insight into the incredible work done by the vets and nurses at Quantock Veterinary Hospital.

Out of twelve outstanding pets, one for each month of the year, we had to choose an overall winner. These were all animals who had come through their health issues against all the odds. It was feared (jokingly) that we might be biased towards the cats - I wonder why? In fact, a brave dog won Pet of the Year 2014.

During the winter our house cats, Millie and Jack, needed much intensive care and medication. Millie was becoming more and more senile, though still eating and with her sweet personality intact.

Jack's heart condition worsened and we were giving him a cocktail of tablets at regular intervals throughout the day.

In March we lost both our precious pets - a very bleak month indeed.

As winter gave way to spring and summer, our visitors returned. Some of the regulars can't seem to get enough of the cat gang and came twice, much to the cats' delight - they got lots of treats!

In August, Barbara had a mini-break with Worcester friends. Jayne, with whom she stayed, had become one of the "feeding party" of some

stray cats living in Worcester cemetery. Needless to say, Barbara accompanied Jayne on those trips to feed the cats who, when they heard Jayne, came running out to inspect the car boot to see what was on the menu! On bad weather days, two of them would have a comfy snooze and warm up in Jayne's car!

We noticed that one of the cats was drinking a lot and resolved to get him vet checked, which we did a bit later. (He's now at Catwork, bless him, as we were right - he has kidney issues - see Jason, p9.)

The rest of the break was most enjoyable, visiting other Worcester friends, a trip to the theatre to see 'Oliver' the musical, and a long drive to Shropshire to visit a purpose-built retirement village for cats - coals to Newcastle, springs to mind!



Stan and Dot with the two Thomas cats



Helen pays a visit to see the cats



Jackie who rescued Eric



Kath gets all the cats' attention (well, almost)



Lyn and Sara with Jasper



Dorinda and Jayne - with only Thomas Cornwall!



Jayne has an armful of Thomases



Jayne struggles to open a tin, while Millie waits patiently in the boot



Millie warms herself from the car heater, while Jason checks out the back shelf

Autumn brought health problems for Barbara, which, thankfully, got resolved before the Christmas panic, and relieved by a great weekend studying the poetry of Thomas Hardy, a great favourite. While better known for his novels, Hardy was a prolific writer of poems, many about animals, which show his acute observation of and compassion for all living creatures.

A much enjoyed production of 'A Christmas Carol' at the theatre set the mood for the festive season, when, as always, a steady trickle of cards and donations for the cats began to arrive at No. 38 and 'Santa Jayne' paid her customary Xmas visit with a sack of goodies for us and the cats, inside and out, and the rabbit.

As ever, our sincere thanks go to all our wonderful sponsors and supporters who enable us to help the cats - we couldn't do it without you!

We are so grateful for all the donations of money, food, wood chip, blankets, toys, treats - the list is endless - and also for the moral support for us at difficult times.

Our vets at Quantock Veterinary Hospital have, as ever, done us proud - so thank you.

At the beginning of 2016, Catwork was home to 16 FIVs, 3 special needs, 3 'lodgers', 5 house cats and one rabbit.



Stella is the centre of attention



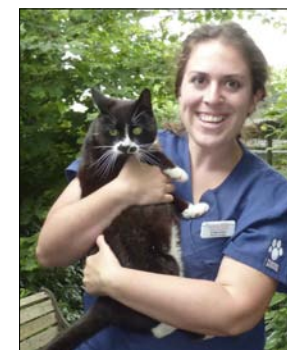
Mike and Rosemary meet Kath and the Thomases



Doug and Liz - those Thomases again!



Rosemary with Guy



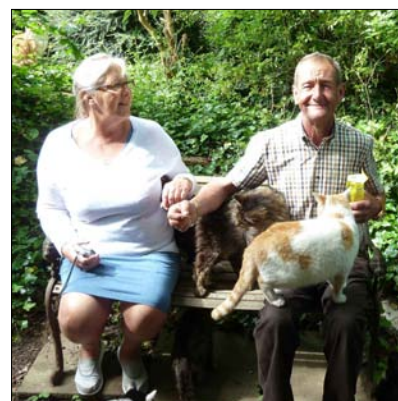
Vet Dee gets to cuddle Trevor



Roger knows how to get their attention - with treats!



Judy with Thomas Cornwall, Jasper and Guy



Patrice (Georgie's rescuer) and David pay a visit



Bernie and Steve choose a wet day to visit

NEW ARRIVALS IN 2015

Solo

Our first arrival of 2015 was Solo, possibly one of our most unusual rescues, in that she had been a show cat as well as a pet, and had won Best of Breed at the Supreme Cat Show in 2010!

Solo's owner, a breeder of Snowshoe cats, and fond of cats with odd eye colours (like Solo) sadly suffered a massive stroke which put an end to her breeding and showing career. A friend of



hers took on all the cats, including Solo, who later became poorly and tested positive for leukaemia virus on an in-house test, which made it impossible for her to return to the friend's household.

The vets in Oxford looking after Solo knew of us from a previous leukaemia positive cat, Buddy, whom we took on, and asked if we could take Solo, which we agreed to do.

Solo arrived in early March and immediately seemed at home in her own chalet with access to a safe outside, which she had not known before.

She is a very pretty and affectionate young lady - real eye candy!

We needed to retest Solo for leukaemia three months after the first test to get an accurate result and, indeed, all the symptoms she exhibited seemed to indicate that she was positive. Poor Solo had a really bad mouth ulcer and the worst diarrhoea we had ever seen. At one stage she really did look in a sorry state.

After weeks of a combination of medicines for the ulcer and the diarrhoea, her appearance slowly improved and the time came to retest for leukaemia at an outside laboratory.

To everyone's utter amazement, the test came back negative! Neither we nor our vets could hardly believe it.

This negative result meant we could potentially rehome her, but she would need an indoor home, as she knows nothing of roads and traffic, and some unscrupulous person might steal her, she is so unusual.

The other possibility was for Solo to join our house cats and, to that end, Bob went about making the garden even more secure.

On the brink of joining the house cats, Solo developed another mouth ulcer, so a mouth swab was taken and sent for analysis which revealed she had calici virus, part of the flu family which can easily be passed on to other cats.

So, at present, Solo remains in the rescue, but seems fit and happy. Maybe the ideal foster home will materialise for her where we can keep an eye on her - she is certainly a beautiful cat who deserves something special.



Barney

Our sponsor in Cheshire, Roger, got involved with an FIV cat at his vets who needed to be rehomed, so we said we would take him.

The practice knew the cat well as "Baby" who had been treated by them on several occasions. They also knew he had an owner who let him out and about, unneutered, and getting into scrapes for a pastime.

On the occasion we became involved, Baby had been taken to the vets with a huge abscess on his neck, and was at this point deemed to be an 'abandoned cat' by the RSPCA, the owners seemingly having washed their hands of him.

Baby, who must have been a cute kitten, pale ginger and white and a bit fluffy, had reached the age of 13 and not been neutered. No wonder he was forever getting into fights.

The vets were delighted when Roger said he was taking Baby down



Barney arrived with neck wound

to Somerset for his retirement - after he had been neutered!

Once at Catwork, Baby spent several weeks in the hospital bay, having the massive wound on his neck bathed and treated twice a day, which he tolerated really well.

After about a month the wound was fully healed, and "Baby" became "Barney" - quite apt as it turned out as, at first, he would have the odd 'barney' with the

other cats. Now only one of them poses a bit of a problem, that being the other 'new boy' who arrived shortly after Barney. These two, at the moment, take it in turns to mix with all the others.

Hopefully, Barney's retirement will be a lot more comfortable than his life so far.

Eric

We were asked if we could help a cat in Wales who was being abused by louts - kicked and thrown against a wall!

The mum of the lady who contacted us gave Eric refuge while somewhere was found for him to go.

So many rescues are full to bursting that FIVs are rarely taken in, so Eric was duly neutered and microchipped and brought to Catwork.



Eric has a chalet of his own as he does have a tendency to throw his weight about when there's food around, though he mixes with the others, apart from the other new boy, Barney - they've yet to sort out who's 'top cat'. The long established cats don't take any notice of rivalry issues.

Eric has settled in really well and doesn't appear to have suffered any psychological damage as a result of past bad treatment.



Jason

Jason was living in Worcester cemetery with two other strays - Millie and untouchable, terrified, Tabby - and being fed by kindhearted people, who had also put little shelters for them in the bushes.

Friend Jayne, after attending a funeral there, saw the cats and joined the feeding party on a regular basis.

Jason had been there for three years, after appearing at the funeral of a

chap called Jason - hence his name.

When Barbara went to Worcester for a short break in the summer, she witnessed the intriguing sight of Jason and Millie running when they saw Jayne's car, and jumping into the boot to see what was on that day's menu!

Jayne had noticed that Jason drank a lot, and Barbara, who had fallen in love with this friendly little chap, was determined he wouldn't spend the rest of his days in the cemetery when he needed veterinary treatment.

Jayne and Catwork paid for Jason to be vet checked and microchipped, and it was no surprise to hear that he was indeed in renal failure.

Jayne brought him down to us where, three months on, he's doing really well despite his health issues.

Jason has his own little chalet, loves his heat pad, eats well and enjoys being out in the enclosed garden.

He has a very sweet nature, demonstrated by the fact that, before he left Worcester, the other feeders went to Jayne's to say goodbye to him and gave him a cuddly toy to bring - Jason has a big fan club!

The Lodgers

The owner of Marmite, Fidget and Bubbles had to move out of her rented accommodation in the summer of 2015, and hadn't been able to find anyone to look after her cats until she was rehoused.

Barbara heard about the situation just two days before the leaving date and, having a good-sized chalet with surrounding run available in the

garden, offered to look after them as long as their food was paid for. We couldn't bear to think of what would happen to the cats if we didn't help, as all possibilities had already been tried and not come to anything. The cats had to be helped!

The three ladies came in July and, at the time of writing, are still here, their owner still being in temporary accommodation.

Marmite

Marmite is a portly, black, middle-aged cat with a somewhat feisty nature.

Always hungry, she is quite likely to take a swipe at the hand that feeds her!



Fidget

This lovely, large middle-aged lady was a stray who joined the owner's other two cats. Despite being microchipped, the actual owner could not be traced.

Fidget has a lovely nature and, despite her size, she is quite a nervous cat.



Bubbles

The baby of the group, Bubbles, was just over a year old when she came to lodge with us. This little cat had not been spayed, but we were able to get this done on a neutering scheme whereby the owner pays a third of the cost, RSPCA a third and the vets the other third. Thank goodness the spay was done, as Bubbles had an abnormal reproductive system which could have caused problems for her later on.



After the operation, Bubbles changed from a scawny little cat into a rather plump young lady who loves her food.

THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2015



Danny (FeLV)

Danny was the first casualty of 2015; he was leukaemia positive and did very well here until the fatal FeLV virus kicked in and a rapid spread of a lymphoma resulted in his having to be put to sleep in January, just three weeks after diagnosis.

Danny was a bright boy, loving people, but not good with other FeLVs. He had come from Birmingham, a stray in someone's garden. Friend and sponsor Jackie trapped and brought him to us in the summer of 2010 when he was a real youngster.

Danny had nearly five years at Catwork, where he seemed to enjoy his relatively short life.



Charlie (FeLV)

Charlie was the last of our FeLV cats who, like Danny, had come to us as a young stray from Worcester, and was the catalyst for a great friendship with Jayne and Dorinda who were instrumental in helping him and finding our rescue. Our Worcester friends have been regular visitors ever since Charlie's arrival in 2011.

Like Danny, he had no health issues until his FeLV virus became activated at around the same age, about six.

Charlie had a best friend in little Tommy, another leukaemia youngster from Worcester and seemed to greatly miss him when he died first.

Charlie, a really big handsome cat, lost his appetite in the summer of

2015 - always a worrying sign. He was checked out at the hospital where no tumours could be detected, but just three days later, we noticed he was having difficulty breathing and rushed him to hospital where an x-ray revealed a chest full of tumours!

The speed of the FeLV virus spread is quite incredible.

Poor Charlie, the last of our leukaemia cats, was a big loss, big in every sense of the word, as he weighed over 5kg when he was put to sleep. He had been quite a favourite with many of our visitors.

Plucky (FIV)

It was a sad day when we had to have this brave little chap put to sleep due to liver cancer after all the psychological and physical battles he'd won since coming to us in 2012. He even won Pet of the Year award in 2013 at our vets' Pet Oscars.

Elderly when he came, with a neck wound that later took 85 stitches to close, and many other health problems which included diabetes, and so very frightened, we didn't expect him to have that much time with us: in fact he had two years which he seemed to enjoy.

Plucky had been so well named; he certainly was the pluckiest little cat we've encountered.



Guy (FIV)

A Bristol cat who came on Guy Fawkes' weekend in 2004, Guy required no veterinary attention for years until, in later life, he suffered weight loss while eating ravenously.

Hyperthyroidism was ruled out on more than one occasion - a common cause of weight loss with hunger. Ultrasounds were



done and various tests at various times, but the vets were never able to get to the bottom of Guy's problem, other than it was to do with the digestive process.

To help his condition, Guy had regular vitamin jabs, "sprinkles" on his food to aid digestion and regular weight checks.

As summer faded, we feared how Guy would cope with the colder weather as he was so painfully thin, yet very bright and active. This worry never became an issue, however, as after a sunny autumn day, Guy passed peacefully away in his bed over night, after having eaten, in true Guy fashion, a full pouch of food at breakfast that morning.



Brandy (Elderly)

This lovely old grey gentleman dates back to the very earliest days of Catwork in the mid nineties, when we were engaged in homing cats in a small way.

Brandy needed rehoming when his owner moved and couldn't take him with her. We found a home for him in Minehead where he spent many years with a characterful lady and several other cats. When she died, Brandy went missing but, thanks to his Catwork microchip, when found he was

linked back to us. Brandy's finder asked if she could foster him, to which we agreed.

Brandy lived on in Minehead for a few more years, but came back to us in old age. We had him fully vet checked and he was remarkably fit for his age - late teens, for sure.

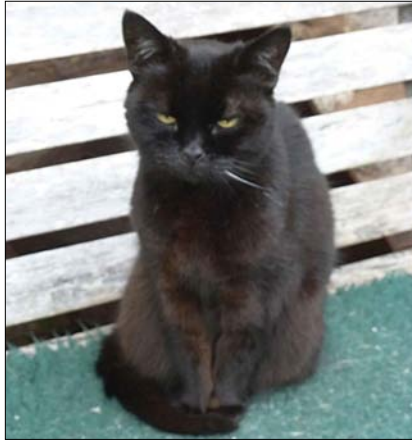
At first, Brandy shared a chalet with blind Baggy in the garden. In December 2014, the cat room in the house extension was ready for habitation and the two old guys moved in.

Brandy spent a cosy winter in the cat room and, in March, simply faded away - he must have been in his twenties.

The House Cats we lost in 2015

Sooty

While friend Jayne was trying to help FIV Thomas and get him to Catwork, she found elderly little Sooty, who had lived with Thomas until he ran off, in quite a state, very dishevelled and crawling with fleas. Their owner clearly was not coping after the death of his wife and was more than happy for both cats to come to us, which they did. Thomas joined the FIV gang in the garden and Sooty joined the house cats.



She was a tiny, bossy little madam who knew her own mind, yet was very affectionate; all the other cats were wary of her!

Towards the end of the year we decided to have some blood tests run as she hadn't been eating as much for a few days yet looked bright and in no way poorly.

Imagine the shock when, blood tests fine, at the hospital she started passing copious blood stained diarrhoea. She was put on a drip but her blood pressure went down and down and nothing the vet did could warm her up.

Poor Sooty lapsed into virtual unconsciousness. By 10pm that evening, all efforts to treat her having failed, we had to let her go.

We were very shocked as Sooty hadn't seemed unwell and had gone off to have routine blood tests done and was expected back home later the same day. Something catastrophic seems to have happened, thankfully while she was actually in the hospital, and not at home.

It was an unexpected dramatic end for this characterful little old lady.

The month of March was unbelievably difficult and sad; the month in which we lost Jack very suddenly and dramatically, and Millie, the Catwork cat, came to the end of her long life.

A year later, tears still come all too easily to Barbara when she thinks of those two, oh so special, cats who shared our home, Jack for ten years and Millie for nearly 20.

Jack

Jack had a very serious heart condition diagnosed in 2011 which, the vet said, probably meant he only had about a year at most to live - Jack, in fact, lived nearly four.

At first we were nervous every time he went out into the garden in case he had a heart attack but, as time went on and he seemed well on his medication, we stopped worrying about him quite so much.



By 2015, Jack's heart problem was worsening and fluid was collecting round his lungs, necessitating quite a cocktail of medications, all to be given at various intervals throughout the day and evening, plus numerous vet checks.

One fateful morning in early March, as we were getting up, we heard a cry of pain from the foot of the stairs where we found Jack collapsed, unable to stand.

An emergency dash to hospital ensued where the vets were able to deal with his acute pain caused by a thrombosis. Having come across this condition before, we knew how serious it was, and his survival chances were slim.

Next day we planned to visit Jack in hospital, but a message told us his kidneys were in trouble, so we knew we were going to lose him. As we got to the vet's consulting room, we were called through to the back to find Jack literally dying in front of us on the table! Everyone had tears in their eyes to see this beautiful black gentle giant's life ebbing away.

Barbara has never got over this scene and doubts she ever will, hoping desperately that Jack was aware of us being there for him in his last moments.

Jack is buried alongside his mate Billy in the back garden, under a specially bought shrub called a "Hebe Heartbreaker", which he surely was.

Millie

Millie, the 'Catwork cat' (our logo is based on her) came into our lives at about the age of six months and was with us for the next 19 years. She was the apple of Barbara's eye. Favourites shouldn't be allowed, but for Barbara, she absolutely was. Poems were written about her, and many photos taken!



When Millie was brought to us as a stray about six months old, she was absolutely terrified. We had to do much work with her to win her trust, then she was ours forever, even called after our cottage's old name 'Mill View' as she had found her true home.

Millie enjoyed good health until her teens, when old age problems struck - kidney issues and hyperthyroidism. Millie was put on medication for both these issues, and did well for several years.

At a late age, Millie needed a difficult dental where a front tooth had grown into and split her gum. On pins while the operation was being done, we breathed a sigh of relief when she came through a tricky operation - the vet was also relieved, knowing he was dealing with Barbara's favourite cat - no pressure then!

At an even later age, Millie was 'away with the fairies' as Barbara used to call it, but she still could find her litter box and had a healthy appetite.

Over the early part of 2015, Millie became more and more disorientated and when she had no quality of life left and lost her appetite, our vet came to the house and put her to sleep, surrounded by the two people who loved her so much and for whom she had been a charming companion for 19 years.

Millie's ashes are in a heart-shaped box decorated with pawprints - she certainly did leave her pawprints on our hearts.

UPDATE ON THE PRESENT CATWORK CATS

THE FIVs



Jasper (this year's front cover cat)

Jasper was the only FIV cat in a multi cat household that friend Mary (who works for the RSPCA in Wales and knows their policy for FIVs) managed to get signed over to herself and so saved him from being put to sleep.

Jasper came to us in 2006 and we estimate he must now be nearly 15 years old.

We feared his end had come in the autumn of 2015 when one morning he appeared to have suffered a stroke; his head was badly tilted and he couldn't walk properly.

Amazingly, after a few weeks on medication in the sick bay, Jasper made a full recovery - so much so that it is difficult to believe anything had happened to him.

It is always amazing to see what cats can cope with.

BT

Another old timer who escaped death by a whisker back at the start of 2007 when a phone call from Barbara, saying we would take him, saved his life just as he was about to be put to sleep! Hence his name BT.

So, this little chap has, so far, had eight years of life he nearly didn't have. As BT would have been about 3-4 at the time of his narrow escape, he must be about 12 now, and has enjoyed a healthy life.

He's still going strong, very bright and always hungry.



Ralph

We have had Ralph, another oldie, since 2009 when he came from Redruth, Cornwall with another cat, Thomas (who died in 2013) when their owner couldn't cope with them.

Although now hyperthyroid, Ralph continues to do well. He looks a bit of a character being cross eyed and having a bent ear, and, though he would never win a beauty contest, he has a very sweet nature.



Harry



Harry has always 'looked after' another cat - first this was his brother, Barley, then blind George and, finally, Plucky. One by one he lost all the friends he'd been with. Now Harry is free to be with all the other cats and choose whom he wants to befriend.

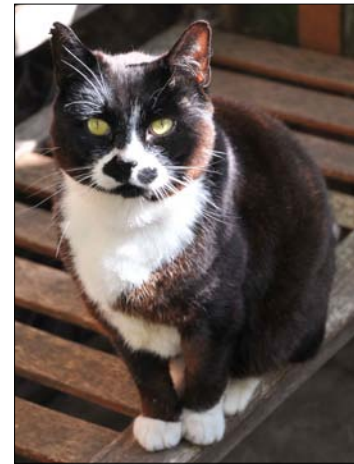
We were concerned about him earlier in the year when we noticed he was losing weight.

Being so very nervous of humans, Harry had to be anaesthetised just for a blood test, the results of which were puzzling. He appeared to be suffering from anaemia, the causes of which can be several.

Harry would never be easy to treat for any condition, so all we could hope for was that the anaemia had been caused by an infection, and drops could be put on his food. Any other reason for anaemia would need much more investigation and surgical procedures which Harry would never be able to tolerate.

The outcome was that, after his course of antibiotics, Harry began to eat better than we had ever known, though he hasn't regained his former size.

With a nervous cat like Harry, it's always difficult to put a treatment plan in place. At the moment, though, Harry seems to be bright, is eating well and, dare I say it, not quite so nervous.



Trevor

Trevor, who has been with us since 2011, had no health issues until 2015, when his mouth problems all began.

He needed a dental, which appeared to go well and he was 'signed off', but it wasn't long before mouth issues and an apparent inability to eat began. It became a constant battle with various treatment options and many trips to the vet to try and get him to eat. For much of this time we were having to liquidise Trevor's food.

In time we arrived at a treatment regime which worked and Trevor finally got back to eating normally again.

During his eating problems, Trevor had many trips to the hospital where he became a firm favourite with the nurses and vet Dee.

Trevor's friendly nature endears him to many people and he has quite a fan club.

Sam

Sam is a sweet, gentle, cat who did well to survive at all, as he was in such a bad state when his rescuer found him in 2011 up in Stoke-on-Trent.

Since we took him on, Sam has done well, overcoming his initial fear of people, and settling in well with the other cats.

Sam has an ongoing sore mouth for which he has permanent daily medication. His other problem in 2015 was persistent diarrhoea. Treatment for this would work for a while, but then it would return.

Currently, after more tests, the lab has isolated an unusual bacteria found in the soil, which seems to have got into his system, and for which he is on long-term medication. Lets hope it will do the trick.





Thomas Worcester

Thomas, whom we rescued from the clutches of Cats Protection where he was in great danger of being put to sleep, being FIV and poorly, did very well after his initial anaemia was treated.

Thomas' one ongoing problem is his sore mouth, and hitting on the right treatment formula has become an ongoing trial and error situation with frequent trips to the vet.

Thomas has a 'presence', and lords it over the others like the king of the jungle.

He's always very up front when visitors come and has been known to pick a pocket to find a treat.

Stop press: As this yearbook was being written, Thomas died very suddenly with no warning, on New Years Day. What a start to 2016!



Thomas Cornwall

Thomas came to us in 2007. He had turned up at a farm in Cornwall, and his rescuers' vet asked if we would take him. We're so pleased we did as Thomas has a lovely nature and outgoing personality.

He did not have such a good year in 2015. Always quite a chubby chap in younger days, Thomas' weight loss became quite noticeable. Blood tests in the summer came back all clear.

Thomas later seemed to have a throat problem as he kept gulping. Investigations revealed a throat infection which was satisfactorily treated, though it did return a second time at a later date.

We reached the end of the year with Thomas carrying out his 'meet

and greet' duties in the Fivery, but, as this book is being put together, we have had, after extensive tests, a cancer diagnosis, and the prognosis is not looking good for our lovely friendly ginger boy.

Toby

We rescued Toby in 2011 as a mere youngster when he was in danger of being put down, being FIV.

The 'so called' rescue' in Southampton, like so many, even now, thought FIV was a 'terrible disease'.

Toby got through his stropky teenage years and settled into a sturdy confident cat who, these days, only occasionally causes the odd problem.

In 2015 Toby had no health issues.



Chris

Chris was a village stray whom we took on in 2014. We thought he might be FIV positive as he had a bit of a reputation and was unneutered - we were right.

Chris needed to be caught as he had sustained a leg injury. Christine, whose cat flap the cat had been going through to pinch food, managed to trap him and get him to the vet. Chris, named after his rescuer, was neutered

and treated for his paw, needing little more than cage rest. He came home to Catwork and spent a week or two in the hospital bay.

A little feisty at first, Chris, over the year, has settled into a happy, sociable cat and has been in good health.



Elvis

We took on Elvis in 2014 from a vet in Wales, whose local rescue was in the throes of moving and unable to accommodate an FIV.

It was probably as well, as Elvis, if he ever got a home, would have been homed as an indoor cat, which we think he would have hated.

Elvis, who showed himself to be quite the escape artist at first, quickly settled into the routine of Fivery life. He had a good year in 2015, and has become rather plump!

Bertie

Bertie was found hiding under the display racks of the shop next door one dark, wet, night in 2008.

No one claimed him, so we got him neutered and microchipped and, finding he was FIV, he stayed with us.

So far Bertie has enjoyed good health. He's a nice little cat with a gentle, affectionate nature.



Mr Mog

Our skittish Mr Mog came from the 'Mogger' in Bristol (a rescue not catering for FIVs) in 2011. So far he has enjoyed good health.

Mog likes to 'do his own thing' and is a bit of a loner who likes being out and about in the garden more than most.



We think he might have been abused in the past as he sometimes flinches at a hand coming towards him, but, realising it's for a fuss, Mog really enjoys it.

Lenny

Little Lenny's life was in the balance back in 2014, when he found himself at a Somerset veterinary practice, having been abandoned by his owners when they moved. Two vets at the practice had opposing views on FIV, but the vet on Lenny's side won out having asked us if we would take him: so his young life was spared.

During his straydom, Lenny probably acquired FIV just trying to survive, which must have been very frightening for such a small, young cat.

When he came to us Lenny was extremely nervous and quite thin. He was so terrified that we put him in the hospital bay for a few weeks so he would get used to us and the routine. He gradually began to trust us and came out of his hooded bed while we were there. He's now fine with us, but still a bit scared of strangers.

We decided to give him an area near the house with chalet and enclosed garden as we felt he was too vulnerable to be up in the Fivery with the 'big boys'.

Other than a slight infection, which soon cleared up, Lenny has been well since he came, and has fattened up somewhat.

He has the sweetest nature and we find it utterly unbelievable that anyone could abandon such a sweet boy.



Georgie

Georgie came from a caravan site in Skegness, where the manageress had been feeding her and providing shelter for her and her brother who, sadly, was run over. Georgie became unwell and it was while she was being treated that her FIV status was discovered.

The vets were asked if they could find a rescue that would take her. We were approached and readily agreed, seeing



her as an ideal companion for little Lenny, who had come to us a few weeks earlier.

Our dear friend Kath, who lives in Lincolnshire, drove Georgie all the way down to us on her second visit of the year.

Georgie, like Lenny before her, was extremely nervous and, also like him, spent a few weeks in the hospital bay getting used to us.

When Georgie and Lenny met, they got on well and make a very handsome pair running about in their enclosed garden near the house.

Georgie is the more nervous of the two, and when we had to catch her to take her to the vet as she had picked up an infection, it was somewhat traumatic for us and her. The infection soon cleared up but Georgie looked at us with suspicion for quite a while afterwards!

Visitors never get to see Georgie as she hides when she hears a strange voice, but she is quietly affectionate with us.



Oscar (fostered FIV)

Oscar originally came from Dorset but has been fostered for us by Moira near Leicester, as we had no room for him at the time he needed help.

Oscar had been found, wet through, by the roadside but, upon examination, no injuries were found. His FIV status, however, put him on death row. A nurse on his side made attempts to find somewhere for him to go and, all the links being made, Oscar's life was saved and he was taken to Leicester.

Having survived an accident, it is somewhat ironic that he was nearly put down because he was FIV!

Up in Leicester, after a shaky start when he briefly went missing, Oscar settled into his life with Moira and all the other rescues (some FIV, some not) and has, so far, had good health.

Special Needs

Baggy

Baggy is a local cat who is completely blind; however, this does not seem to hinder him at all.

When he first took up residence in the cat room, which has many levels, it took him no more than an hour to figure out how to negotiate all levels.

We took Baggy on when his owner had to move into rented accommodation where cats were not allowed.

Baggy shared the cat room with Brandy, but when Brandy died of old age in 2015, we tried to incorporate him with the house cats. This, however, only partially worked out as Baggy, a very determined old boy, wanted to rule the roost and gave the male cats a hard time - only tiny Sooty would tell him 'where to get off', with a smack around the head!

Baggy has to be restricted to the kitchen, hallway, cat room and garden, where the other cats can get away from him, spending the nights in the cat room. Baggy is quite active for an oldie, loves his food and loves attention.



THE HOUSE CATS



Marmaduke

Marmaduke, now the senior cat in the house, is still bright and performing his duties as the 'meet and greet' cat when visitors come.

He had a couple of 'off times' in the year when there appeared to be something wrong. Results of blood tests on the first occasion revealed all was well. When he appeared unwell the second time, he was even hiding away, but after a very

tense Marmaduke had been examined, and nothing found, he appeared perfectly normal when we got back to the house!

Vets seem to scare him, having had no recent experience of them, though at the start of his life he needed major surgery to save a hind leg which he couldn't use when he was found on the village bypass as a tiny kitten. The repair work has never stopped him climbing and jumping.

Marmaduke is a very good natured, handsome cat; he's very affectionate and loves attention.

Coco



Our big panther-like Coco is the most scared of all the cats, despite his size. So many things frighten him - noises, dogs, strangers, especially children. With us, Coco is very loving and quite confident.

We have had Coco since 2011 when Barbara was doing the launch of the FIV book. His terminally ill owner was desperately trying to find a home for Coco whom she had rescued as a mere youngster. We said we would give him a

home, bringing him all the way from Eastbourne where Barbara had been staying with friend Maureen who knew of Coco's plight.

Coco turned out to be the biggest 18 month cat Barbara had ever seen! We are very fond of him and have never regretted taking him on.

Polly

Polly was found as a stray in Nether Stowey in 2006. Finding homes is not what we do and Polly, being nervous, was rather vulnerable, so she stayed.

Polly got spooked after her first foray into the garden and ran off; amazingly, two weeks later we got her back. After this unwelcome adventure and much searching for her, we decided Polly needed to be an indoor cat, which she doesn't seem to mind at all.

She enjoys all life's comforts greatly and loves luxuriating in front of the log fire on winter evenings.

Oliver

Oliver has been with us since Christmas 2007, when a postman found him in a country lane and we were asked to help to catch him. At the time, Oliver was a mere kitten, eating bird food from the bird table of the only house around. Always hungry ever since, he had to be called Oliver.

Oliver loves to snuggle up next to a radiator, and likes to tease poor Polly. He had a good year, healthwise.

Little Man

The little cat we took on as a youngster in 2012 with a twisted neck (it looked like his head was back to front) came from a farm near Worcester, where the unneutered cats were throwing up various genetic problems. Not long after we took him on, a large polyp was removed from Little Man's ear and, in time, the neck became virtually straight again.

These days one would never know how strange he looked as a youngster. His behaviour remains strange, however! He



likes to talk to himself - loudly (we don't think his hearing is too good). He's also transfixed by light beams.

He now enjoys good health apart from needing a dental towards the end of the year because of an abscess under a front tooth. He quickly bounced back from that. Little Man is very affectionate.



Darcy

This sociable little rabbit was found as a stray in Wales. Friend Mary, who had fostered him, asked if we would have him when the previous bunny died. How glad we are that he came to us as he is such a character, running up to greet cats and visitors

alike, playing with his favourite ball and thumping when annoyed.

His friendly nature and mop-top hairdo endear him to everyone.

Darcy, about 8 years+, had a good 2015.

ANOTHER CAT WE WERE INVOLVED WITH

A Carol for Christmas

In early December we became aware of an elderly tortie stray found in the village; no one knew where she'd come from or whose she was till some weeks later.

The poor little cat was so skinny, matted and ravenous that two kind people she'd found to give her food were concerned, and one took her to the vet and put up 'found' notices. Nobody claimed the little soul and the vets were unable to find anyone to give her a home.



Catwork came to the rescue (or so we hoped) not being able to bear the thought of the little cat having to be put down at Christmas time.

Carol, as we called her, after the lady who'd taken her to the vet, and in keeping with the season, caused us much concern as she was so very hungry and would eat absolutely anything she could find, but it became obvious that she wasn't able to keep anything down.

Anti sickness and anti reflux medications were tried over the Christmas weekend, all to no avail, yet the skinny little soul seemed so bright - we were puzzled.

There was nothing for it but to do further investigations. By this time, an owner had come to light; she didn't appear to realise the cat had been wandering around for a few weeks, literally starving. She hadn't been able to cope with the cat and had put her out in an outside shed. We could hardly believe our ears!

An x-ray sadly answered all the questions as to why Carol had not been able to keep anything down - a tumour was growing around the oesophagus preventing all but a tiny amount of food reaching the stomach, and a second tumour was situated at the top of the heart. Poor little cat!

All we had been able to do was keep her warm, dry and comfortable, and loved for what was to be her last Christmas.

FIV FRIENDS REMEMBERED

In memory of Minstrel

Minstrel was a Bristol stray in 2010, befriended by a cat loving couple, the Godfreys, who took him to their vet when he appeared injured one day.

Minstrel, being a stray, was blood tested and found to be FIV positive, which at the time meant little to his rescuers. What they did know, however, was that they were not going to allow their furry friend to be put down, which is what they were told would happen if the cat was not claimed.

Catwork was approached for help by the receptionist at the vets, and Barbara spent some time explaining the 'real facts' about FIV to David on the phone, and suggested he and Trish come and visit the sanctuary, which they did.

We said we would take Minstrel and he came to Catwork to recuperate, but David and Trish had learned enough about FIV to want to take him on and incorporate him into their cat family.

In due course Minstrel, whose wandering days were now over, went to live with the Godfreys where he had a wonderful life but with quite a few adventures, including the amputation of a leg, due to an accident. He showed himself to be a lovely character, especially when rescue kittens came into the household, which he would look after. None of the other rescues, needless to say, ever contracted FIV.

In later life, Minstrel was diagnosed with cancer and no expense was spared to get him state of the art specialist treatment many miles away. Minstrel became quite a star at the clinic which he attended where he



was renowned for his placid co-operative nature.

Eventually, however, Minstrel's quality of life deteriorated, and the Godfreys, with heavy hearts, had to let him go in November 2015.

Minstrel was one of those incredibly lucky FIVs to have ended up with the right people who were prepared to fight for him to the end.

Minstrel showed everyone, especially the vets, that FIV is the least of the cat's and the owners' worries.

A tribute to Timmy

Timmy was rescued in a dreadful state by an old friend of ours doing rescue work in Wiltshire. Timmy had been living rough in a coal yard, was very nervous and altogether a bit of a mess. Jeanne, his rescuer, worked with him for many months until he was well enough to



be rehomed to a sensitive person - this person was Helen, whom we came to know after Jeanne suggested she get in touch with us for a chat, Timmy being FIV.

We had many chats about Timmy; Helen became a sponsor and after visiting the sanctuary, hopefully didn't worry quite so much about Timmy's FIV status. This little cat had a great life with Helen - a devoted owner, the best of food, lots of toys, an outside run, and even went on holiday with Helen in the caravan!

Timmy had a heart condition which was regularly monitored but, sadly, it was the dreaded cancer which was the cause of his death in 2015.

During his life, Timmy went from the proverbial rags to riches; he lost all his nervousness and grew into a wonderful companion who is much missed.

Being rescued can be risky

FIV cats belonging to individuals who do their own research, not believing that their cats have a "terrible disease", are the lucky ones.

The FIV cats who end up in certain 'rescues' are in a much more perilous position, as it is very much a lottery as to whether they get to live or die.

The same old culprits we know of who are quick to kill FIVs are RSPCA, Blue Cross, and, increasingly, contrary to what the name implies, many Cats Protection groups.

It is so very sad that a person handing over a stray to a rescue centre, thinking they have done the right thing and saved its life, may have done the exact opposite if the cat turns out to be FIV positive - they might, unwittingly, have condemned it to death.

We recently read a study of Cats Protection Adoption centres and were appalled at the numbers of cats put down, statistically more because they are FIV than for any other reason.

People who give money to some organisations in the belief that cats are being saved would probably find it hard to believe that many are killed for no good reason.

Something we are increasingly being made aware of are cases where kind people who have been caring for a stray and wish to adopt it, have enlisted the help of Cats Protection towards the cost of neutering, but have not been made aware that the cat will be blood tested, and what the implications of a positive result for FIV will mean - recommendation that it should be put down!



Blackie

In last year's book we told the story of a local cat, Blackie, caught up in just this scenario, and was put down, leaving his rescuers very shocked and very angry, especially as Blackie's rescuer already had an FIV cat!

Recently, we heard about Beauty, a quiet, dear little cat up in Yorkshire, whose rescuer, again, wanted to give him a home. The local Cats Protection were to help with the neutering but, once again, their insidious testing policy was carried out. Beauty was found to be FIV positive and it was recommended by the ignorant vet that he be put down.



Beauty

It was only later that Beauty's rescuer did her own research on the subject of FIV and came across our website and realised all too late how wrong the CP vet had been in what he had said about FIV.

This is what she wrote in her report to our 1000 FIV cats project: *"...the day I took him to my vets to be neutered, they rang me to say he was FIV, I knew nothing of what this meant so I was swayed by my vet and he was pts. I am still heartbroken and will always feel I let this beautiful boy down. I was told by the Cat Protection that cats with this die a very long painful death, which is so... wrong. My vets told me that he would be so ill, never allowed out and would infect my cats, wrong again :-("*

When she contacted us she wrote: *"This is Beauty. He may only have been in my life for five weeks, but he has touched my heart forever and will never be forgotten. I am crying as I type this."*

It cannot be right for caring people like these, thinking they are doing the right thing and wanting to give a home to a stray cat, to end up feeling very sad and guilty for listening to people who should know better about FIV.

The worry is that in both the above cases, we are talking about the very organisation that purports to "protect" cats!

Vets still in the 'dark ages' on the subject of FIV base their ideas on flawed experiments done in labs back in the 80s and 90s when a massive dose of the FIV virus was given to cats: this clearly was never going to produce the same results as a naturally acquired virus which would start with a tiny amount and then take a very long time (many years) to have any effect at all in the cat infected.

Many vets also have a habit of seeing the effects of straydom - poor condition from poor nutrition, injuries and other health problems from neglect - and blaming it on FIV; FIV is part of the result of straydom, not the cause of the other issues. Once the effects of straydom are addressed, cats can go on to live perfectly long, healthy lives like any other cat.

In our sanctuary after many years of looking after FIV cats, we have proved that FIV cats lead perfectly healthy lives and many routinely make it into their teens without problems.

Old age brings health issues sometimes, but that is the same with any living being, ourselves included.

Our 1000 FIV cats database (over 620 so far registered) is showing the same results - we can't all be wrong!

Confrontations

Our attempts to stand up for FIV cats resulted in two confrontations in 2015 - one with Cats Protection head office over the treatment of Blackie, and the other with Lincolnshire Trust for Cats who had put down eight FIV cats, all on the same day even though a friend was offering to take them all and look after them.

Many emails went back and forth between Catwork and Cats Protection legal department regarding Blackie. First it was claimed he was feral and that was the policy for FIV feral cats. When we pointed out he was not feral, another reason for putting him down was used, and so it went on. At no time did the local group or the vet concerned ever respond to our requests for reasons; we were requested to address all our concerns via head office (as if HQ in Sussex would know better what happened in Somerset!). Unfortunately, those at head office were unable or unwilling to give straight answers to our questions, and eventually simply stopped even trying to excuse themselves, but would never quite bring themselves to admit their fault! The fact that they refused to give straight answers, we believe is very telling! (Full details of our attempts to get to the truth are on our website under the title: "Blackie's betrayal".)

We would like to note that there are some individual Cats Protection groups who ignore head office policy on FIV cats and actually do great work helping FIV cats, but, sadly, they do seem to be in the minority.

The Lincolnshire Trust for Cats, not wanting to share their FIV experience with us, nor tell us why eight beautiful FIV cats had to die, threatened us with legal action if we said anything defamatory about them!

When we pointed out that actual 'facts' cannot be considered defamatory, they too backed down. (Details on our website under the heading: "Lincolnshire mystery".)

The sad fact is that FIV cats are hostages to fortune, and whether they get to live or die is a lottery. To us, and many like us, each life is precious and worth the saving.

On a more positive note

We have spent much time on emails and phone chats with FIV owners and rescuers who, we're glad to say, are often reassured by what we are able to tell them about our experience of FIV over 19 years.

Our booklet on FIV written in 2011 is now on its fourth print run and has gone to many parts of the UK, while the digital version has been downloaded by many people abroad. People seem to find it helpful.

Our 1000 FIV cats project, begun a year ago, to create a database of real-life FIV cats has passed the 600 mark. The results have been remarkably consistent, inasmuch as, once initial problems resulting from straydom have been addressed, FIV cats do as well as any other cat. Do visit the site www.fivcats.org and read some of the remarkable stories processed so far, many of them with pictures of the cat in question. These cats have been the lucky ones.

Our hope is that, one day, all FIV cats will be given the chance of life.

In the meantime we hope to continue to be a 'voice' for the Blackies and Beauties of this world, and look forward to a time when no FIV cat will have to die, just for being FIV.

Catwork FIV Mission Statement (Rant)

FIV is a **F**airly **I**nnocuous **V**irus,
but is surrounded by **F**alse **I**nformation, which spreads, erm, **V**irally!
This can allow **F**ear to be the **I**nsidious **V**ictor.

You need to beware of **F**requently **I**ll-informed **V**ets
and **F**undamentally **I**gnorant **V**olunteers
as each can lead to **F**atally **I**nnocent **V**ictims.
Even those cats who are allowed to live
are often given a **F**orced **I**mprisonment **V**erdict
whereas they should be given a **F**uture of **I**mpunity and **V**alue.

Although FIV may seem to be a **F**rightening **I**nitial **V**erdict,
remember, **F**actual **I**nformation is **V**ital.
In our experience FIV cats are **F**riendly, **I**mpressive and **V**aliant.

We continue to **F**ight to **I**mprove **V**iews on the issue.
We despair of the **F**ailure by those who **I**gnore the truth about the **V**irus,
but maybe that's because we **F**iercely **I**dentify with the **V**ulnerable.
Hence our, hopefully, **F**ar-reaching **I**nformation **V**enture.

Our view is that accurate **F**acts **I**mprove **V**alue.
Lets hope that in the future we can **F**requently **I**llustrate **V**ictory.
Well, that may be our **F**runkly **I**mpertinent **V**iew,
but lets make sure it's not just a **F**atuously **I**mprobable **V**ision,
because we aim to give these **F**abulous **I**ndividual cats a **V**oice.

We have rebuilt our website!

Our old website had evolved and grown over many years and had become rather disjointed; it needed attention.

As more people now access the Internet from their mobile devices, we also needed to make the website work better on those (phones and tablets) - so we started again from scratch. Although much of the original content is still relevant, we took the opportunity to expand and extend the scope.

Although, of course, our work of the sanctuary is the basis of everything, more and more, the site has been a source of 'real life' information about FIV; so the sanctuary work has become a section of the main site which has its focus on FIV information.

We have divided the site into sections:

- What you need to know first about FIV
- More details about FIV
- Our comments around the subject of FIV
- Where things go wrong in FIV rescue
- Our 1000 FIV cats data project
- and - The Catwork sanctuary

www.catwork.co.uk takes you directly to the sanctuary section, but the main site has the domain www.fivcats.com

Go and have a look around and all will become clear!