


THE CATWORK YEAR
2021

Front cover

Sweet pretty little Georgie is our front cover cat this year.

Georgie is our only FIV female. FIV is not common in female cats as the virus is usually passed on through fighting, which is most common in unneutered males.

The last thing this sweet-natured cat would do is fight, so we can only assume she was attacked by an infected cat.

Georgie has been with us since 2014 when friend Kath, on one of her visits, transported her all the way from Skegness where she had been living on a caravan site, fed and looked after by the owner. When Georgie tested positive for FIV, the site owner was anxious to find a secure place for Georgie, and Catwork fitted the bill.

Georgie is a sweet cat but so very nervous that, after all this time, she only relates to Bob and myself - she's nowhere to be seen when visitors are about. With us she is very affectionate.



The Catwork Year 2021

So here we are in 2022, time for another Catwork update.

2021 was remarkably like the year before, with few visitors, frequent closures of the vet outpost across the road from our house, and the inevitable loss of some of our cat family, some very unexpected.

We also lost two of our long term supporters, Gill Grimwood and Pete Mason, as well as my older sister who made it to the age of nearly 93. All in all a rather sad year for us, like so many others up and down the country in these strange times.

On a positive note, our wonderful sponsors and supporters have yet again enabled us to look after the cats in our care who, although fewer in number, seem to require much medication the older they get. We consider ourselves so lucky to be in the position, with your support, of being still able to care for the cats when so many rescue centres are having to close. Goodness knows what is happening to all the animals who need rescuing!

More cats were added to our FIV database (currently numbering 1091) which many people find helpful. Bob replied to many emails from FIV cat owners worried about various FIV related issues, and I had chats with other owners whose issues it was easier to talk through on the phone.

In late winter and spring we once more immersed ourselves in the wildlife on our doorstep. The bumble bees were daily visitors to the winter flowering shrub by our back door. To our delight, a pair of dunnocks built a nest in the hedge in the enclosed and safe garden area outside the back door; we took much pleasure watching them collect materials, including cat fur, but we didn't see the fledgelings.

Mostly animal programmes and the repair shop occupied our downtime in the evenings.

January and February were, as usual, the months when we worked, in

our spare time, on the yearbook in order to get it out before Easter. Many of you seemed to enjoy seeing the gallery of most of the cats who had come through the sanctuary since 1997.

April, according to the poet TS Eliot "is the cruellest month", and so it proved for us as we lost, suddenly, our beloved housecat, Coco, to a thrombosis from which there was no recovery. I also lost my sister who was a great animal lover but not a pet owner.

More losses followed, some expected, others not, making it a very sad spring.

A visit from our friend Sara towards the end of the month was most welcome.

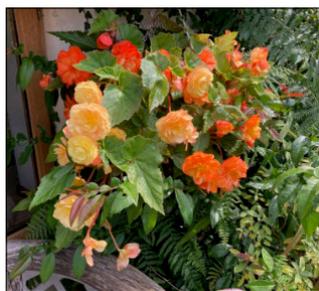
On my birthday, in May, we finally met up with my son Ted, and Anna and grandson Freddie, for lunch at a pub up in the Quantocks. Indoor eating still forbidden, we were outside in the garden. Although the day was wet and windy, it was lovely to meet up again after such a long time. Freddie, helped by his mum, sang 'Happy Birthday' in Polish; he's becoming quite bilingual.



We had a visit from Michaela and her family, who were interested in what goes on at Catwork.



Summer arrived and our plants put on a good display in the back garden.



The hanging baskets filled with apricot trailing begonias gave an amazing burst of colour which lasted through to November!





Friends Sara, Lyn and Annie came down from Bristol. We had a lovely time catching up and spending time with the cats.



Dora and Romilly (my daughter and granddaughter) came over for a visit; much fuss was made of Marmaduke.



A couple of day trips arranged by my daughter Dora got me away from the house for a bit. One trip was to Rosemoor, an RHS garden down in Devon that had an Alice in Wonderland theme that weekend.

The other outing was to an amazing local display of sunflowers - whole fields a mass of yellow as far as the eye could see.

In June we were asked to help an FIV who was considered by the rescue he was at to be unsuitable as an indoor only cat (the only way many rescues will rehome FIV cats). A friend of ours, helping out at that shelter, overheard he was going to be put to sleep! She asked if we would help and we did.



Larry was brought to Somerset with dire warnings as to his temperament but, as has happened so many times before, after a couple of days he realised he was safe, comfortable and well fed, and is now one happy and affectionate cat who gets on well with the others, blissfully unaware of what a narrow escape he had. Read about him on page 15.



In August we took on a terrified cat who would have been impossible to home, from another rescue centre. Little Humbug was taken into rescue from a garden where he had been living and fed by someone until she died. In foster care he hid away the whole time,

for several months, and it was no different when he was moved to a cattery; he was so fearful of people. He was clearly more feral than stray and just froze and hid away in captivity.

With outside space on offer at Catwork and a cosy chalet, we thought we could help the poor chap, as did the rescue he was in. Humbug

was duly brought to Somerset. Having had other really scared cats before him, we had high hopes of bringing him round. Humbug, however, had other ideas. A couple of days after his arrival he found a weak spot in the enclosure down at ground level and dug his way out, though it was some time before we realised how he'd managed it.

As he had been with us for a couple of days and had food with us, we hoped he might return when hungry. We put food out for him and set up a camera trap to see what happened. Humbug did return for the



food for a few nights and when we sent the camera trap video to his rescuer, she said he looked more relaxed than she had seen him for the nine months he had been with them.

He was clearly more relaxed with his freedom, so we wondered whether we could establish him as a resident garden cat outside of the sanctuary enclosures. We set up a small shelter at the far end of the garden away from disturbance, and put food and water there for him. Sadly, Humbug did not return again.

Hopefully, the warm summer and autumn and, so far, mild winter may have meant he has been able to resume his feral ways and survive as the free spirit he obviously wanted to be.

Humbug is neutered, vaccinated and microchipped, so there's always a chance of getting him back, and we continue to put food out every night. The whole incident has made me very sad. We just wanted to take proper care of him, but he hated human company so much he clearly had other ideas.



Our friends Stan and Dot Ducker finally made it over to see the cats. It was good to see them again after such a long time.



Autumn here was pleasant and colourful, our summer bedding holding out well.

The resident cheeky squirrel made short work of the hazel and walnut trees' produce this year, clearing both of nearly all their nuts over a short period!





There were a couple of visits in October: firstly, friend Ella from the village called in and spent time with the cats, especially her favourite cat, Fidget.

Shortly after, we had another visit from Sara, bearing gifts for the cats again.



In November, Bob and I celebrated our ruby wedding anniversary - forty years of a life together; and that's second time around! How have we spent all that time? Well, half of it was spent looking after cats!

After a quiet pub lunch, we went to my daughter's in the afternoon; it being a Saturday, we were joined by my son Ted and family. Dora had organised a wonderful cake to be made for the occasion which looked for all the world like a bouquet of flowers - a shame to cut into it!

We had so many cards, it was like an early Christmas; altogether a very memorable day!



Then it was all downhill to Christmas. We produced our own Christmas card last year, featuring our Marmie, with a little festive addition. Cards were written and presents wrapped for friends and family.



Jayne and Alan came down from Worcester as usual, playing Santa Claus to the cats, and a pleasant time was had by all.

Our year ended on a sad note when our poor old blind cat, Gizmo, whom we took on from the vets just a year ago, apparently suffered a stroke at Christmas, and had to be put to sleep. He had just a year with us which we think he much enjoyed, pottering in the enclosed garden, sunbathing in the doorway and eating all that was on offer. The poor boy was 17 years old. He had settled in so well, and we miss him.



Now for a look at what happened to the cats in 2021.

UPDATE ON THE CATS

The FIVs

Trevor

Trevor began the year with his usual mouth problems. Despite having had a major dental he was still having problems eating. He was put on various medications but nothing seemed to help.

On taking Trevor to the hospital for yet another mouth examination, the reason for his current difficulties became clear - vet Louise discovered a tumour called a melanoma on his left lower gum. We were devastated



as that sort of cancer can spread rapidly, we were told. The vet was very pessimistic about his prognosis. We asked what could be done? Surgical removal was an option, but that would not prevent spread, and the tumour would most likely regrow. Anxious to buy Trevor some time, we asked for the surgery to be performed, which happened a couple of days later. The tumour was sent to the lab, who confirmed it was indeed a melanoma. Poor Trevor!

We took Trevor for a consultation, following a referral letter from the vets, to a specialist oncology centre near Taunton, only to be told that, as melanomas are uncommon in cats, not much work had been done on the treatment of such cancers in cats!

Having drawn a blank there, Bob put a posting on a FIV health science group he follows, and a reply suggested that curcumin (an active ingredient of turmeric) had potential for resisting regrowth and reducing the spread of such cancers.

I immediately followed this up and was lucky enough to find a practising herbal/homoeopathic vet in our area, who, after a telephone consultation, prescribed Trevor a herbal remedy with curcumin and also a homoeopathic remedy for his specific type of cancer.

The homoeopathic remedy has to be given away from food, three times a day, and the herbal remedy on something tasty to disguise it. This all means that Bob and I get all the exercise we need going up and down the garden several times a day with Trevor's remedies. The little chap is worth it and he takes all his medicines and, despite the vet's poor prognosis, is still with us nearly a year after the removal of the tumour.

Frequent check ups show that there is no evidence of regrowth of the melanoma or spread of the cancer. Vet Louise calls him a 'miracle cat' who has not read the text books. Trevor is a star!

Throughout all his issues (he's also hyperthyroid), the handsome Trevor never stops purring! Even waiting to be seen at the hospital the receptionist the other side of the rooms asked "is that Trevor I can hear purring?" This also presents the vet with a problem when listening to his heart!

Trevor has been with us since 2011, coming from a vets practice in Southampton where he was very popular. We estimate his age at approximately 13-14 years old.



Toby

Toby, compared to Trevor, had an uneventful year apart from an ear problem which was easily treated.

We have had Toby since 2011 when a 'rescue' was about to have him put to sleep because he tested positive for FIV! He was only about 18 months old. Luckily, we got to know of Toby's plight and he came to Catwork where he has grown into a handsome cat with few issues.

In 2019 Toby needed an ear operation to treat a haematoma, but the surgery was so good that

you'd hardly notice, and his good looks remain intact.

Toby has no teeth, but this doesn't prevent him enjoying biscuits and treats. Toby is not the brightest cat, but very lovable all the same. A bit 'stropky' in his teenage years he has grown into a calm friendly adult.



Johnny

Johnny was brought down to us from Essex in 2017. I instantly took to him as he was shy and unsure of himself, which traits tug at my heartstrings.

The little chap had health issues as well as psychological ones. Like people, some cats seem to sail through life with hardly any issues, while others have more than their fair share - Johnny was one of the latter kind.

Soon after he arrived, Johnny needed a dental, then he had a good spell of health until he suffered a urinary blockage a year later. The blockage proved almost fatal as he went into muscle spasm.

Hospitalised for a week, it was touch and go whether Johnny would make it as he kept pulling the catheter out. After the catheter was adapted to overcome the problem, Johnny was on the road to recovery, and came home with a cocktail of medications.

It was nerve-wracking worrying if he would block again, but he remained free for a whole year and seemed to be doing well on his urinary diet. Then he blocked again meaning another spell in hospital, and, eventually, home on the same medication cocktail as before.

Just one year later, when all seemed to be going in the right direction, Johnny stopped eating, and investigations at the hospital revealed a cancer in the stomach! Johnny, sadly, did not last long on palliative care and, just a month later, had to be put to sleep. The poor little chap had many health issues in the four years he was with us and was only approximately 6-7 years old when we lost him.

Johnny had a lot to cope with in his all too short life, and I miss him very much.

Elvis

Elvis came to us from Wales in 2014 and, until last year, did not require any veterinary treatment. In 2021 he needed a dental. Always a bit aloof around visitors, we were surprised to hear what a hit he was at the vets - very up front and affectionate, apparently!



Unfortunately, Elvis was found to have severe gingivitis (gum disease) so was put on a long course of antibiotics and pain relief. He seems to be doing alright now and managing to eat without difficulty.

Eric

Eric came to us in 2015, again from Wales where, we were told, he had been abused as a stray. His bad treatment does not seem to have affected him as he is a large, friendly, sensitive soul. Unfortunately he's a bit of a tease around the other cats who do not know what to make of him; so Eric has a large



part of the Fivory garden to himself as well as the whole garden in the evening and overnight when the other cats are in their chalet areas.

Last year, Eric, after many years of not needing any veterinary treatment, needed to be seen several times. He had an eye problem on one occasion, a poorly paw on another, and a full examination where blood tests were carried out which showed he was starting to have kidney problems. Eric is now on a mostly renal diet which, fortunately he seems to be eating.



Macavity

Mac, as we called him, elderly and very 'shut down' was thought to be unhomeable by the rescue that had him. He needed help, so we took him on and he came to Catwork where he could live out his time just being himself.

Mac had his own chalet, and it wasn't long before he was out in the garden and even went up the tree to survey his surroundings. It was great to see him come out of his shell and relax and be able to enjoy his 'retirement'.

Mac wasn't keen on the other cats but was able to keep out of their way in the large Fivery garden.

Grumpy old Mac hated being groomed and, having very thick long fur which easily became matted, this became a problem. Eventually he had to be shaved, poor old thing. Once the fur had grown back he looked his handsome self once more.

Early in 2021, Mac seemed to deteriorate and not eating so well. He had some 'pick-me-up' jabs at the vets, but continued to decline. Investigations at the hospital showed him to have liver cancer, so we had to have him put to sleep.

The good thing was that he seemed to enjoy his time here where nothing was expected of him and he could just be himself.

Larry

Our newest resident is lucky to be alive. We acquired him in the summer when the rescue he was with, who only home FIV cats to indoor only homes, decided he wouldn't be suitable as such, and he was to be put to sleep. Incredible as it seems, this still happens to some FIV cats because of the ridiculous policy of only allowing them to be homed as indoor only.

This poor chap was once owned, but something happened, forcing him to survive as a stray. When he kept going into a house to get some food, he was taken into rescue where he gained the reputation of being unpredictable. "When in doubt, get rid of the problem" seems to be the philosophy of many rescues still.

Hearing of his plight we, although trying to wind down, said we would take him in, and he was duly neutered, vaccinated and microchipped.

Once again it wasn't too long before Larry, as we named him, settled into life in the Fivory, mixing with the other cats and becoming affectionate towards people. He now knows he's going to get fed, has a place to call his own and is "happy as Larry". What a narrow escape he had!





Georgie

Georgie, our front cover girl this year, has been with us since 2014 when friend Kath, on one of her visits, brought her down all the way from Skegness. Pretty little Georgie had been living on a caravan site, and, after her brother was run over, and she tested positive

for FIV, the site owner wanted to find a safe permanent place for her.

Nervous little Georgie shared a chalet and garden area with little Lenny, who was about the same age. The two black and white cats were great together, but to my utter dismay, Lenny picked up e-coli, thus compromising his kidneys, so we lost him at all too young an age.

Georgie, these days, lives in the cat room extension, which leads out onto her old garden area. Since losing Lenny she has had various other elderly cat companions.

Georgie remains as nervous as ever, especially when she hears strange voices or something out of routine happens. When not scared, she can be really affectionate towards Bob and myself. Georgie enjoys good health, which is good as she's terrified of being caught to go to the vets. Lets hope things stay that way!

The other. non-FIV, cats

Fidget

Fidget, a quiet, pleasant, undemanding cat, came to us in 2015. We took her on, along with two other cats as a temporary arrangement when her owner was being evicted. We were to look after them until their owner found a new home. This didn't work out; one of the cats, Marmite, sadly died while with us and it became clear that Fidget and Bubbles were in danger of not being properly cared for as the owner clearly could not afford them.



In the end, all money owing was waived in return for giving Fidget and Bubbles a safe place and good care at Catwork.

Fidget enjoyed good health in 2021, but towards the end of the year she began being sick most days, so investigations into the possible cause were planned for after Christmas when things would be a bit less frantic!



Bubbles

Bubbles came in 2015 along with Fidget (see above). She seems fit and healthy apart from every summer experiencing fur loss around the head and neck, seemingly due to some sort of allergy. We thought we'd found the culprit - the mock orange, which flowers in early summer in the area the cats occupy - and some drastic pruning was done. Unfortunately, this did not seem to make any difference and Bubbles got the large and inflamed bald patches the same as ever. A

course of antihistamine and daily application of lotion were given and, as usual, in time the fur all grew back.

Bubbles is a nice little cat, not much trouble and wanting attention when she can get it.



Toby

Toby, a terrified tonkinese, belonged to a cat-loving friend, Phyllis. Her daughters had bought Toby for their mum as Phyllis liked oriental cats, but he was not really suitable for an elderly lady who was often bedridden, as Toby is, in our opinion, a "posh feral".

In all the time we've had him (since 2016 when Phyllis died) he has remained a 'scaredy cat'. Any trip to the vet has to be planned with military precision as to how to catch him and get him in a basket! Toby was diagnosed back in 2020 with calici virus, meaning his

mouth is very sore, so we have to liquidise his food.

Toby had a good year in 2021 and did not need any trips to the vet, thank goodness.

Poor Toby seems as if he wants to be friendly but just won't let himself go and take the plunge.

Jemma

We took on Jemma and her brother Justin in 2016. They had been found in a box outside a supermarket in Weston-super-Mare. On being taken to a vet, Justin was found to be positive for leukaemia virus (a life limiting virus) but Jemma did not.



Justin died from the virus in 2019, leaving Jemma to live with the other cats in the first part of the garden.

Apart from a dental, Jemma had never shown any sign of illness, so imagine our shock horror to find her dead, stretched out on the floor of her chalet one morning back in the early summer of 2021; was it a heart attack, we wonder? The night before she died, she'd had her supper as usual, showing no sign of being unwell. Such a shame as she was a pleasant little cat only about 7 years old.

Hattie

Hattie came from a Wales RSPCA centre with sister Holly and Ginge - all elderly and who had been part of a multicat household. Friend Mary told us about them to see if we could help. Age and health issues against them, it was very unlikely they would find another home together. Mary brought them down in 2016 for their 'retirement' in the cat room.

Little Holly was the most compromised healthwise; we lost her in 2018, when we also lost Ginge.



Hattie wasn't alone for long as Lenny and Georgie (youngsters by comparison) moved into the cat room which leads on to their little garden area.

Hattie was diagnosed as hyperthyroid in 2020 and put on medication; however, she remained as hungry and skinny as ever.

In early 2021 more tests were done but the reason for her enormous appetite remained a mystery. Capsules to aid food absorption were added to her medications but Hattie got more and more frail and, towards the end of the year, she passed peacefully away in her bed.

Hattie was a tough little cookie and we think she enjoyed her retirement at Catwork.



Mikey

Mikey was returned to us, thanks to his microchip, in 2019, ten years after I'd homed him to someone I knew, who managed to lose him!

Mikey had been a stray in our area, probably dumped on the Quantocks. The clever cat found a lady to feed him, but she was returning home abroad and asked if we could help find him a home, which I did. We drove Mikey many miles to his new home but all went wrong when he went missing; we were so upset.

Trips to where we'd homed him were made, leaflets and posters were distributed and vets asked to look out for him, but all in vain. Ten years went by. Then, in January 2019, a vet practice in Bath phoned to say Mikey had been brought to them by a young couple who had found him in their shed, in a bit of a state, to put it mildly.

Poor Mikey had a bad facial abscess, some bad teeth and polyps in his ears, but his bloodwork showed his major organs to be in good shape. "Did we want him put to sleep?" they asked because of the poor state of him. "No" was our firm reply. We would drive to get him and bring him back to our vets in Bridgwater, an appointment having already been made for that evening. When we saw Mikey we realised he wasn't about to give up either, bless him.

We imagine he must have adopted somebody after he was lost, and then became a stray again when something happened to that person - we'll never know. I bet he could tell a tale!

Anyway, back at our vets, Sarah said she'd get to work on Mikey the next day, which she did. The huge abscess on Mikey's face was drained and cleaned, polyps removed from both ears and a dental given. Next day Mikey came home and recuperated in the sick bay in the cat room extension where he ate, slept and recovered. Mikey soon regained his strength and grew into a big 5kg handsome older gentleman.

Sadly, Mikey's ear problems became a recurring issue for him. One time in 2021 he was given ear gel treatment and put on steroids, and in April had another operation to try and remove more of the polyps which were regrowing.

In November, Mikey needed a dental. He was also put on a special ear drops which we had to administer in both ears every other day; poor boy hated it and we would get showered if not careful to get out of the way when he shook his head. The medication, however, did seem to keep the polyps at bay. By the end of 2021 Mikey seemed to be deteriorating, losing weight and not his 'old self' and he gradually lost his appetite. Being unable to open his mouth, vet Louise did an examination under sedation but could find no further dental issues. We began to suspect neurological problems were affecting Mikey.

Stop press - While writing this yearbook, despite all our best efforts, Mikey just wouldn't eat and would spend most of his time, head down in his bed. We suspected he was in pain and, despite heavy duty pain relief, he did not improve, so he was gently put to sleep at the end of January, exactly three years after returning to us, thanks to his microchip.

As vet Sarah said, Mikey was a legend; he must have been 16-17 years old and must have had a very eventful life, about much of which we will never know. The bit we do know is that, for the last three years, Mikey has been safe and cared for. He was such a character; we miss him greatly.

Postscript - On losing Mikey, we were worried that Georgie was now left on her own in the cat room; she had got on well with Mikey.

We decided to introduce Bubbles, Fidget and Toby to her. We are pleased to report that they all get on well together and Toby seems to have taken a bit of a shine to Georgie. So we are relieved that she is not lonely, as we had feared.



The house cats

Marmaduke

We've had our darling 'Marmie', star of last year's book and Christmas card, since he was a small kitten, found at the side of the village bypass unable to walk. Our vet, thankfully, was able to save the back leg which had already started to heal but at an angle, preventing him from walking. We think he may have been stepped on and, presumably, then callously dumped by the bypass!



All this happened in 2002, which means Marmie is now in his 20th year. Throughout all those years he has been an absolute joy - a great favourite with all who meet him; he's known as the 'meet and greet' cat, bless him!

As 2021 progressed, Marmie, unsurprisingly for his advanced years, began to have health problems. Early in the year he frightened us greatly by having a short fit. Upon ringing the vet for advice as to what to do, we were told that it was best to leave him to quietly recover and only take him to hospital if he had another fit, which, thankfully, he didn't.

Marmie had a full check-up next day at the hospital when he seemed his normal sunny self. His kidneys, which had begun to deteriorate, were not a cause for concern (must be the homoeopathic remedy - eel serum - he's given). Marmie had another short fit later in the year but was quickly back to normal - worrying though all the same.

Later in the year Marmie was found to need a very bad tooth removed and, under the anaesthetic, vet Louise discovered, on the same side, a tumour in the nose! He was put on steroids to slow the growth of the tumour and a new drug recently on the market (solensia) meant to help with arthritis but, anecdotally, seems to help with cancers. Marmaduke has a monthly injection of this. I also got in touch with my newly found holistic vet who prescribed a remedy tailored to Marmie's

character and the type of cancer he has. We're hoping against hope that the little chap will be with us for a while yet, but there are indications from his breathing that the cancer is progressing. He's on antibiotics to keep at bay any secondary infection; we just have to keep our fingers crossed for our lovely boy.

Marmie's such a special little chap; we call him our 'golden wonder'.



Coco

It was back in 2011 when I first heard of Coco. I was staying with a friend whose vet had asked if she knew of anyone who could take on a young black cat, Coco. The lady who had been feeding him as a stray and who had got him neutered and vaccinated was going into care, being terminally ill. She was very worried as to what would happen to Coco as, if taken to a rescue, he would find it hard to get a home, being black and extremely nervous.

My heart had already gone out to this poor boy and, when I told Bob about him on the phone, we agreed we could take him on as a house pet.

Coco came back home with me to Somerset all the way from Eastbourne. I was able to send pictures to Mrs Poole, his rescuer, of Coco in his forever home - not a moment too soon as the dear lady passed away two weeks later; she knew, thank goodness, that Coco was safe and would be cared for and loved. And love him we did!

Coco was a really big lad when we took him on, considering he was only 18 months old. He had a slightly oriental look to him and was so very nervous. He never related to anybody other than Bob and myself and was scared of absolutely everything - fireworks, bin men and especially children.

Coco did well until 2020 when he showed the beginnings of renal issues. Luckily, unlike many cats, Coco would eat the renal diet and, of

course, I gave him my famous eel serum homoeopathic remedy, known for its therapeutic effect on the kidneys.

Coco was also starting to have an upset stomach. In 2021 his gastric problems were worsening, so we had an investigation done on him at the hospital. What the vet found was not what we expected - he was seen to have a really serious heart condition but had shown no signs of such: no weight loss, no breathing difficulties or slowing up. We were truly shocked as the vets were saying how bad it was. Coco was sent home with much medication which had to be given at all different times of day. After two weeks on the medication, he had a check up and seemed to be doing well and, indeed, Coco seemed his normal self.

Our hope that Coco would continue to do well on the medication was to be short lived, as a few days later, on Easter Monday evening, Coco seemed very uncomfortable and was obviously in pain and distress - a thrombosis had occurred and caused him to go off his legs; it was unbearable to see him like this and Coco was admitted as an emergency at the hospital, but we knew there was no coming back from this and we would be losing him. All that could be done was to get him out of pain.

Next day, Bob and I were able to be with our lovely boy when he was put to sleep. We were heartbroken. We had our lovely boy cremated, Coco was only about 11 and should have had so many more years with us, and was too young to die. I am so glad that, at least, I was in the right place at the right time to take him on and give him a home he seemed to like. He would stretch out on the log store in summer, then move to a little round chair in the garden to catch the evening sun and, in winter, he would take up position on the footstool in front of the fire.

I don't think we'll ever get over the loss of our lovely, trusting boy who was scared of so many things but who developed a very close bond with us.



Polly

Back in 2006 Polly was a stray being fed by a lady in our village who, unable to take her on asked for our help. Not into rehoming, we decided to keep her. Polly is not a special needs cat so she, along with Marmaduke and Oliver, are funded by ourselves, not by our Catwork sponsors.

We called her Polly because she has an extra toe on each foot - such cats are known as polydactyl.

Polly, easily spooked, ran off the first time we let her out

into the garden. After searching for her for two weeks, we had a call from the lady she had originally adopted to say she had found her way back there. Polly has been an indoor cat ever since.

In her long life she has, on the whole, been very healthy except for, early on, needing all her teeth to be extracted, and periodic bouts of the snuffles, easily put right by a course of antibiotics.

Last year, however, Polly did give us a fright when she fell off the arm of the sofa twice, and the second time she seemed unable to get up. Fearing she had had some sort of stroke we rushed her into the emergency vet, it being halfway through the evening. After a thorough examination the vet could find nothing wrong - Polly seemed her normal self. That was an expensive out of hours consultation! I think such episodes are known as TIAs. Thankfully there has been no repeat of such an episode and Polly continues to be her chatty self at an age of about 18.

Oliver.

Oliver was found when just a kitten, around Christmastime in 2007, by the postman on his rounds in a nearby village. The postman phoned his mum who came to our house to see if we could help - of course we would!

I drove to the village armed with a carrying basket and a tin of tuna and met the postman who showed me where he'd put the kitten, in the hedge. There was only one house nearby, the owners of which said the kitten did not belong to them, but they had seen it eating food off their bird table



- pity they hadn't come to the aid of the vulnerable little chap before! However, he was okay, if a bit dishevelled and hungry. The tuna went down well and I grabbed the kitten and drove home with him. As it was vet afternoon in the village we were able to get him checked out and, as you might have guessed, the kitten became one of our house cats; we called him Oliver as he always wanted more.

Normally a chubby chap, we noticed last year Oliver was losing weight; we suspected he had become hyperthyroid, which proved to be the case. While being assessed at the hospital Oliver got so upset and scared that the vet rang to see if we could come and get him as soon as possible. When Oliver needed a check-up three weeks later to see if he was on the right dosage of tablet, Bob waited for the blood to be taken so he could bring him straight home again. Oliver's a sweet cat, easily scared. He's now doing well on the medication.



Little Man

We took on Little Man, or "Littles" as we call him, in 2012 when friends of ours rescued him from a farm in Worcester. So much inbreeding had occurred on the farm that kittens were being born with deformities.

Littles' head was so twisted that he looked very deformed. It didn't seem to bother him however; he was full of energy and very affectionate. Our vet was able to operate on Little Man and remove a large polyp. Soon after this, his head started to straighten up, which made him look like a normal cat. Littles is a rather handsome chap and as affectionate as ever. He loves all the warm spots in the house, the radiator bed and the footstool by the fire on winter evenings.

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Gizmo

We took on elderly, blind, Gizmo from our vets on Christmas Eve 2020. The poor old cat had been seen by a member of the public being tormented by yobs, and she contacted our vets. He was found, terrified, in a hedge by one of the nurses and receptionist who extricated him from the hedge and took him back to the hospital where he was checked out.

Gizmo remained at the hospital for quite a while; despite him having a microchip, no owner was found. We do know, however, that he was 16 years old and called Gizmo. The staff at the hospital fell in love with

the old boy and tried to find a rescue or a new home for him - all in vain. Of course, when we heard of his plight, we had to help and, to everyone's delight, we went to fetch him on Christmas Eve.

Gizmo took to life with us and the other cats without problems, finding the litter boxes and enjoying his food; he was very good at 'washing up' the dishes of anything left by the other cats.

Gizmo seemed to really enjoy the summer, sleeping in the open doorway to the garden, and pottering around the first section of the garden which is totally enclosed and safe.

Gizmo had a major dental, and the vet tells us that as soon as he woke up, he started eating! Good old Gizmo!

Imagine our sadness when, exactly a year later from his coming to us, over Christmas 2021 Gizmo became very distressed, his behaviour became more and more erratic and he stopped eating. We had to take him to the hospital and the duty vet said nothing could be done. It seems something major had happened and poor Gizmo had to be put to sleep. We had given him exactly a year, which he seemed to enjoy, and we enjoyed having him.

That brings to a close the events of 2021...

We said goodbye to six cats: [Johnny](#) (p12); [Mac](#) (p14); [Jemma](#) (p18); [Hattie](#) (p19); [Coco](#) (p23); [Gizmo](#) (p27).

We said hello to one cat: [Larry](#) (p15).

And finally:

All we are able to do for our rescue cats is only made possible through the generosity of our sponsors and supporters.

Our housecats - Marmaduke, Polly and Oliver - are funded by ourselves, everybody else is funded by our Catwork friends. We feel incredibly lucky that many of our supporters from the very beginning are still with us, several of whom we have never even met!

I'd like to tell you about two of our Catwork friends who sadly passed away during 2021: Gill Grimwood and Pete Mason.

We met both Gill and Pete in the very early days of Catwork, in the middle 1990s, before we became a sanctuary even.

Gill found out we were doing a bit of rescue work and asked if we could help a poor old cat called Bertie who had been living rough down on Exmoor. People were feeding him but it would seem nobody was prepared to take him on.

We drove to Exmoor and met Gill and her friend at the appointed place. They had collected Bertie when out for a horse ride, and handed him over to us - one of our earliest rescues.

Bertie, sadly, did not live that long after his rescue, but at least he had food and shelter, and we had made an ongoing cat friend who gave us lots of support ever after until her sad death from cancer in 2021. Before she died Gill gave us a handsome donation to help us care for cats in need.

Pete, another huge cat lover, helped us enormously down the years by taking on cats we were asked to help, but who did not need to be in a sanctuary.

Pete was a bit of a "cat whisperer" and brought round some very difficult cats in his time. He especially liked to help elderly cats who were often unwanted, and gave them five star food and accommodation in his immaculate home in Minehead.

He had a 'cats room' for any newcomer until such cat was able to join in with whoever else might be there.

Pete would ring up on a regular basis to give me all the news on "the kids" as he called them.

Also struggling with a cancer diagnosis, Pete died in hospital in November. I miss his cheery phone updates and the Christmas card, the envelope of which always read "Barbara and Bob opposite the vets", which always made me smile.

Gill and Pete were two lovely cat people, who individually made a great contribution to helping cats in their different ways. It's people like Gill and Pete, and all our supporters, who have enabled us to help many cats down the years. So, thank you, everyone!



Catwork is a sanctuary for cats with special needs particularly those who test positive for FIV and FeLV



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