


THE CATWORK YEAR
2022

Front cover

Oliver was found in a country lane by the postman at Christmastime in 2007 when just a kitten.

The poor little chap was, we heard, eating bread off a bird table belonging to the only house near where he was found.

Upon being asked to help, I went, armed with a cat carrier and tin of tuna, and met up with the postman who showed me where Oliver was hiding up.

The tuna did the trick - Oliver came out, was grabbed and put in the basket and brought home.

A vet check that afternoon gave him a clean bill of health and he became the latest addition to the Hunt feline family.



The Catwork Year 2022

2022 was a year of great change for us and Catwork. We had decided we could no longer take in any more FIV cats who tend to be quite young when first diagnosed and who might outlive our ability to care for them and so face an uncertain future.

With this in mind we wrote to our lovely sponsors asking if any wanted to stop or reduce their sponsorship.

Amazingly, not much changed on that front! In fact some of our supporters are caring for as many rescues as we are.

As it turned out, several of the cats in our care went on to have complex medical issues, so, with the vet bills going ever higher, we were grateful for the ongoing support.

Changes to the Fivery garden itself also took place. Some major tree surgery needed to be done to the walnut tree and, due to the willow tree having become dangerous, that needed to be removed completely.

This meant that we had to remove the five cats living in the top part of the garden known as the Fivery. We moved them to the area nearer the house where our special needs cats used to be, but whom we had no longer.

The cats seemed to like it there as there are lots of seats and perching places and more to see. It also proved much easier for us, so we decided to make the move permanent.

We began emptying all the chalets in the old Fivery which, over the years, had housed many cats. They now serve as stores for all the bedding, baskets, litter etc. It was very sad to see the garden, once full of cats, now empty.

We removed much of the fencing and opened the area up, hoping that wildlife would move in to the now quiet and largely undisturbed Fivery garden. A wren pair nested under the eaves of the top chalet, the

resident squirrel grew bolder and cheekier than ever, grabbing all the walnuts and hazel nuts before we could, and the camera trap revealed a visiting hedgehog.

The garden outside the back door was a riot of colour thanks to over zealous purchase of summer bedding.

For us personally it was a very sad year in which, at regular intervals, we lost all bar one (Oliver) of our house pets. They were all elderly except Little Man who had a stroke .We also lost several of our FIVs all of whom had quite complex issues at the end.

On the bright side we adopted, as our own personal house pets, some cats with special needs to help fill the void left by those we lost. They are Gerry, an elderly hyperthyroid female; Frankie, also hyperthyroid, who had been abandoned, and Fred from a multi-cat household who hadn't had much of a life so far, we understand.

The highlight of the year was the reopening of the branch veterinary surgery, newly refurbished, opposite our home. We were asked to officiate at the opening ceremony, and the new operating theatre was named the "Catwork Theatre" - full details are in the December section of this yearbook.



All change at the Fivery when the arborists arrived and major tree work started before spring.

Fortunately they were able to get access with a cherrypicker from our neighbour's private road.

Read on for details of the Catwork year 2022, month by month.

January

Mikey

We had a worrying start to the year as Mikey was hardly eating. Investigations were done but it seemed like all the problems he had in the head area had finally beaten him. He seemed, despite pain relief, to be suffering and was visibly deteriorating. With great sadness we had to let him go; he was peacefully put to sleep across the road at the veterinary outpost. It was exactly three years since he was found and returned to us through his microchip. His life for the previous ten years will forever be a mystery.

Mikey came into our lives as a stray who had adopted a local lady. However, she was returning to her home abroad and asked our help to rehome him. At the time Mikey would have been about three or four years old and in good health. He had no special needs so did not need to be in the sanctuary. I had a contact near Bath who was a cat lover and had recently lost his rescued cat, and he agreed to take on Mikey, so we took him to his new home. To our dismay, Mikey went missing almost immediately! We undertook some trips to the area with leaflets and posters and knocked on doors enquiring about him, but all in vain. We were so upset by the whole affair but there was nothing more we could do.

Ten years later...in January 2019, we had a phone call from a vet practice in Bath to say that Mikey had been brought in to them by a couple who had found him in their shed and he was in quite a bad way. Immediate treatment had been given and the microchip



traced him to Catwork! I was 'over the moon' and said we would come and get him despite the vet saying Mikey was not in good shape. He had a bad facial abscess, some bad teeth and polyps in his ears, but his bloodwork showed that all his major organs were fine. We drove to Bath, which is quite a way from us, to get Mikey, having made an appointment at our vet hospital that same evening.

When we saw the dear cat we knew that Mikey was not about to give up, and neither were we.

Vet Sarah, back at the hospital, said she would get to work on Mikey the next day. The abscess was dealt with and he had a dental and the polyps were removed from his ears.

Mikey came home and rested and recovered in the sick bay in the cat room. Unsurprisingly he did little else but eat and sleep for some days.

Mikey made a remarkable recovery and, at his best, weighed over 5Kg. He was a strikingly handsome senior citizen and quite a character.

Sadly, Mikey's ear problems were a recurring issue and he had a further operation to deal with them when they became troublesome.

Towards the end of 2021, Mikey was losing weight and clearly going downhill. Early in the year Mikey was refusing to eat and seemed to be in pain despite pain relief. We knew we had to let him go and he was peacefully put to sleep, three years since he was returned to us.

Having known Mikey as a three year old and missing for ten years, Mikey would have been about 17.

We'll never know what Mikey had been up to in the intervening years; we can only guess that he adopted somebody after he went missing from the home I had found, but then ended up as a stray again when, thankfully, he was found and taken to a vet!

Undoubtedly the microchip saved his life as we were able to get him sorted out and enjoyed his company for another three years. As vet Sarah said, Mikey was a 'legend'.



Fidget

Fidget had a general health profile done as she was sick most days, despite eating very little. Nothing remarkable was found so she was put on anti-sickness medication and a sensitive diet.



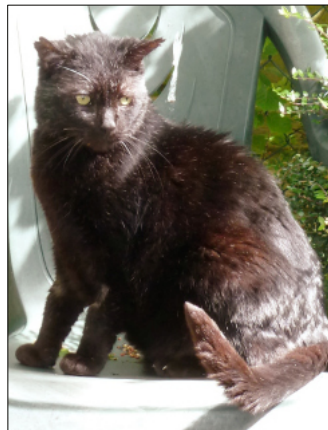
Friend Lesley came down from Bristol to spend a few hours visiting the cats - our first visitor of 2022.

February

Eric

Eric was not eating well and was booked in to the hospital for a check-up. When vet Kamila tried to look in his mouth, Eric shrieked loudly, jumped off the table where I had been trying to hold him and hid under a trolley. His mouth, poor thing, had become so sore that no wonder he was having trouble eating.

Eric, when we managed to get hold of him, was given a steroid and antibiotic, which for a while seemed to help and got him eating again - alas, not for long as it turned out.





Toby

Toby, as sometimes happened for a day or two, was off his food, but he was also looking quite unwell. An examination at the hospital revealed nothing, but vet Sarah had a suspicion he might have pancreatitis. This, apparently, is one of the most missed conditions because of there being no obvious symptoms. Sarah said a blood test would tell us if Toby did have pancreatitis, and it turned out that he did. Having this condition means that

sometimes a cat is in discomfort and won't want to eat.

Toby was put on a sensitive diet and pain relieving tablets to have in store for when he had a 'bad day'.

Toby also had itchy ears for which we had to apply drops on a weekly basis.

M a r c h

Eric

Eric's mouth issues were ongoing, making eating difficult and giving him his medication almost impossible, so he was given it by injection.

Trevor

Trevor too was having mouth issues; we were concerned that the melanoma found on his gum a year before might have something to do with it, but on examination, it was not visible. After all that time, it was amazing. As vet Louise said, Trevor hadn't read the text books where melanomas were concerned as they are usually so very aggressive.



Trevor was given a 'pick-me-up' jab and antibiotic and some pain relief medication to be given at home over the following few days.

The treatment seemed to get him back on track once more and he resumed purring - when Trevor wasn't purring, you knew something was wrong!

Fidget

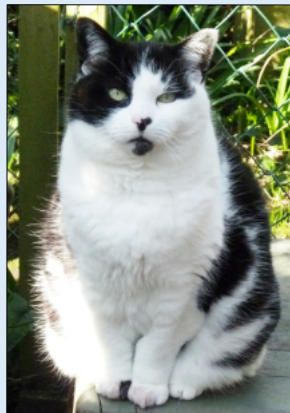
Poor Fidget continued to be sick most days despite having been on anti-sickness medication and sensitive diet, of which she ate very little.

It was decided that she should have an ultrasound scan. We were not prepared for the result, which showed she had a mass on her liver. No wonder she had been sick so much, and yet this gentle, placid cat had not given any indication of how rotten she must have been feeling.

Nothing could be done as regards treatment or to improve her quality of life so, in consultation with the vet, we agreed that she should not be woken up from her anaesthetic. This, sadly, meant we could not say our usual goodbyes. That finding was quite a shock; when Fidget went in that morning for her scan, we certainly didn't think that would be the last time we would see her. This was such a shame as we thought we would have her with us for a few years more, but it was not to be.

Fidget came to us in 2016, one of a trio of cats we took on as boarders for a young lady who was being evicted, until such time she found somewhere else to live. As time went on it became clear that the boarding arrangement wasn't working. When one of the cats sadly died and the owner was having difficulties paying the vet bill, we said we would pay the bill and take on the other two cats to ensure they would be properly cared for. So Fidget, along with Bubbles, stayed at the sanctuary.

Fidget was a sweet, unassuming, gentle cat and enjoyed fuss when it was given. She was in good health until 2021 when she began being sick most days, due to what we now know was a mass on her liver. It was an unexpected and sad end to a lovely cat we had hoped would be with us for a lot longer. Hopefully she was happy at Catwork where she was safe and cared for.



The arborists finally managed to fit us in to their busy schedule. The February storm made extra work for them, and it had also damaged our willow tree, so we were pleased to finally get the work done.



We had a couple of days warning, so got the cats moved to their new section of the sanctuary. Fortunately they seemed to settle very quickly.



Sara paid her regular spring visit to catch up with us and the cats.

April

Eric

Poor Eric's mouth troubles continued; he was having so much difficulty eating and was in obvious pain. We were giving pain relief by injection but there was no resolution to Eric's problem, so a dental was planned to remove the worst of the teeth.

Frustratingly, after the dental where several bad teeth were removed, there was little improvement. We found ourselves back in the same regime of jabs and daily pain relief given orally which caused him and us some distress. We were running out of options for the poor old boy. Up until the previous year, Eric had needed very little veterinary care, but in 2022 he was the cat who needed a great deal of veterinary treatment. We felt so sorry for him as he was such a dear old soul.

Polly



Polly was noticeably losing weight and condition, but otherwise seemed fine except she was more hungry than usual, so we suspected she might have become hyperthyroid. She was taken back to the hospital by vet Louise to do some blood tests. We were totally unprepared for the findings - her kidney levels were so bad they were off the scale! This result was so unexpected as we had all thought she was hyperthyroid, not in kidney failure. The symptoms didn't fit! Yet another little cat who hadn't read the text books.

In an attempt to help her kidney function Polly was hospitalised and put on a drip for 48 hours. We were told that things were so bad that she might 'crash' when taken off the drip or, alternatively, the therapy could help, for a while at least.

When Polly came home on Good Friday afternoon, she seemed her usual bright self. She had her supper and favourite treats and settled on the cushion on the back of one of the settees - her usual evening perch. At bedtime we went to persuade her to go upstairs where she always spent the night. She looked to be in a deep sleep, but on looking at her more closely, we realised she had passed away! What a way to go, but in some ways, a nice way - Polly went to sleep in one of her favourite spots and just never woke up. It was, as you can imagine, quite a shock for us.

This sweet little cat, who came to us as a stray, 16 years before, was cremated at a small local pet crematorium where animals are dealt with on an individual basis.

Polly had been a stray in the village whom we were asked to help back in 2006 when she would have been 3 or 4 years old. We kept her as one of our personal pets, an unusual little cat with five toes on each foot (polydactyl). She was a little soul not to be messed with!

We kept her as an indoor cat as she was easily spooked and, in the early days, had actually gone missing for two weeks on



her first foray outdoors. Thankfully, Polly found her way back to the lady who had been feeding her as a stray on the other side of the village, so we got her back. Polly seemed content as an indoor cat after that experience; her only

problem was being teased occasionally by two other house cats, Oliver and Little Man.

Polly loved to come on our bed every morning and get us to play with her; she would 'bite' our fingers but, having no teeth, it wasn't a problem.

Polly must have been 18-19 years old when we lost her. How we miss our morning sessions with the characterful, affectionate little Polly.

May

Marmaduke



Our darling Marmaduke finally came to the end of his life; he was 19¹/₂, bless him.

He had been getting more and more frail, eating less and his nasal tumour bleeding more. We wondered for a long time how we would know when it was time to let him go as he was such a brave little soul, always trying to please and be around us.

By the middle of the month, we could see Marmie was struggling and we were able to have him gently put to sleep at the vet outpost just across the road. Vet Louise agreed that the timing was right, which was a little comfort. You can't bear to see animals you love suffering but we knew that losing Marmie was going to be difficult to bear.

Our darling Marmaduke was brought to us as a kitten, having been found at the side of the village by-pass. His rescuers heard him mewing from the other side of the busy road, poor little chap.

Unable to walk, we didn't know what the damage was until the vet next day said he would operate and try to fix his damaged leg, but it would be difficult on one so small and amputation might be necessary.



Two visitors, unknown to us at the time, were in the area and had called to see what Catwork was all about. They were actually here in the kitchen when Marmie was brought to the door. These visitors, Maureen and Ray, offered to pay for Marmie's operation, and we have been friends ever since, cats being a large common interest. Thankfully, the vet was able to save the leg which had in fact tried to mend, indicating it hadn't been a recent car accident, but probably damaged by someone stepping on him. The bones had started to fuse at an angle, meaning he couldn't walk.

Marmie needed to be cage rested for some time - difficult for a young kitten who wanted to be investigating everything. However, the leg was fixed though he would always sit with the offending limb not folding away neatly. Marmie was all set to enjoy his long life, adored by everyone who encountered him. He had the sweetest nature and was known as the 'meet and greet' cat.



When he got to be a senior citizen, Marmie developed early

signs of kidney problems which never got to be an issue - my famous eel serum homoeopathic remedy probably helped.

In 2021 Marmie needed a bad tooth removing and, on the same side, a nasal tumour was spotted. He was put on a daily steroid and did very well for many months. Marmie was also given a monthly injection of solensia, a drug for arthritis, but also thought to be helpful for cancers. By May 2022, old age and the tumour had caught up with him. He became very frail and the tumour started bleeding, but the dear little chap never lost his charm and eagerness to please. We realised we had to let him go as his quality of life was not good. We took him across the road to the vets and our little golden wonder was gently put to sleep. He has left such an enormous hole in our hearts and home, but we feel so privileged and grateful to have had Marmaduke for nineteen and a half years.

What a blessing he was found on the bypass all those years ago and brought to us.

Trevor

In the afternoon of that same day (which was in fact my birthday) we had another shock when Trevor, who had been coping so well with his cancer and his hyperthyroidism, appeared to be having breathing difficulties, and Bob had to rush him to the hospital as an emergency. Fluid was filling his chest and his heart was 'all over the place'.

Vet Louise, who had put Marmie to sleep in the morning, then had to give the bad news that Trevor was in deep trouble, and the kindest thing would be to put him to sleep.

Trevor had been doing so very well, especially since his cancer had been diagnosed well over a year before.

What a birthday! Our lovely vets had a collection for a bouquet and cake, plus a card which Louise delivered to our home that evening in an attempt to cheer me up a bit on my birthday.

Trevor came to us from a vet practice in Southampton where he was very popular and the staff were keen to find him a permanent home. Trevor was also very popular here with



visitors and vet staff; he never stopped purring.

Throughout his life Trevor had mouth issues intermittently with several dentals.

In 2020 he was found to be hyperthyroid and in 2021 a melanoma tumour was found on his left gum. That was very bad news as this type of melanoma is very aggressive and, when removed, often come back quickly.

We felt we would like to 'buy him some time' and asked Louise to surgically remove the tumour. She must have done a superb job because on every successive check up the tumour was not to be seen. We took Trevor to a specialist oncologist, only to be told they weren't really able to help.

I did, however, put Trevor on to herbal and homoeopathic remedies supplied by a specialist holistic vet I found, tailored to Trevor's specific cancer. I'm convinced the remedies helped because Trevor went on to live another 14 months past his cancer diagnosis.

The end came out of the blue in May when his breathing suddenly became very rapid. Rushed into hospital as an emergency, he had to be put to sleep - the cancer and everything else had caught up with the poor little chap. He must have been about 14 years old and had coped so well with his several issues. He was such a happy little chap and greatly missed.

Eric

Poor Eric's mouth problems persisted and more pain relief and antibiotics administered to help him eat. It looked as though another dental was becoming inevitable despite his teeth, from what could be seen, not looking too bad.



Oliver

Little Oliver gave us a real scare (as if we hadn't had enough already lately) when one evening we noticed him breathing heavily. We were able to get an appointment next day over the road, and vet Sarah said he must immediately be taken to hospital!

Bob drove into Bridgwater straight away with Oliver, who was immediately put in an oxygen tent where he stayed until he was stabilised, poor little chap.

Investigations revealed he had fluid in the lungs and diuretics were administered to which, thankfully, Oliver responded well.

As Oliver gets so stressed away from home the vets were keen to get him home as soon as possible. Upon arrival, Oliver seemed unable to stand or walk properly - a really frightening experience. He improved quite quickly, so we suspect the anaesthetic hadn't fully worn off. Things settled down and Oliver became more his normal self. He was put on daily diuretic tablets as well as his thyroid medication, and a subsequent check up showed he was doing okay. What a relief, especially after all the losses and dramas we'd experienced lately.

There were a few bright spots in this very sad month. I did a workshop on Irish poetry and went on a theatre trip with daughter Dora and family.



My son Ted and family visited, and grandson Freddie loved handing out treats to all the cats.

June

Eric

The poor boy did have a dental and some bad teeth were found and removed. Sadly this didn't seem to make much difference to his being able to eat without running away from the food and having to be persuaded to have a go at eating.

We were using a pain relief drug called gabapentin which also helps psychologically - part of the problem being that the poor cat expected the process of eating to be painful.

What to do? We were running out of options. The only thing left to try was to remove all his teeth, which sounds drastic but is known in many cases to help solve the gingivitis issues, which quite a few cats suffer from. However, the procedure is not always successful; about 20% of cases still fail, we were told. With no other options left, we felt it was a risk worth taking as poor Eric was losing weight and hardly eating. He was duly booked in for a full dental but, very unfortunately, half way through the op, his blood pressure dropped and the vets had to stop and bring him round from the anaesthetic as it would have been dangerous to continue.

The dental was completed a week later with much forward planning to avoid the same occurrence with the blood pressure.

After a very worrying morning, vet Tony managed to complete the dental and we all hoped the gamble would pay off - again, only time would tell.

Eric came home with much pain relief and Bob spent a great deal of time at each meal trying to persuade him to eat. We realised that, after such a major dental, it was going to take a while for Eric's mouth to settle down enough to be able to eat.

After several days, nothing seemed to have changed with Eric still not eating at all.

As a last resort, we tried a transdermal appetite stimulant (a cream applied to the inside of the ear) and finally, just when we thought we would have to have him put to sleep, Eric managed to eat a little and continued to do so thereafter - admittedly only small amounts but he was going to the food of his own accord. We hoped against hope that he was starting the recovery process.

Pain relief continued and the appetite stimulant and we hoped things would continue to go in the right direction.

Little Man

Little Man was booked in for blood tests as he seemed not his usual bright self, though he was eating okay and had been seen for a check up only a couple of weeks earlier.

Two days before his blood tests were due, disaster struck, completely out of the blue. Littles got out of the bed he had been sleeping in when he saw us, and his front leg buckled under him. He managed to get off the bed and hobbled limping into our bedroom where his limbs were all over the place and he was unable to stand. We immediately made an emergency call to the vets and Bob drove him straight to the hospital.



Littles was given emergency treatment and tests were done to try and figure out what had happened.

After examination, vet Sarah concluded that the problem was, in all probability, neurological. Our poor little chap deteriorated in hospital and all his left side became paralysed.

Next day, when we saw Little Man, we knew there was only one thing we could do for him, which was to stop his suffering and put him to sleep. To see our once bright, happy, affectionate, funny little cat in such a pitiful state, unable to move, is a picture I will never get out of my head. At the age of about 10, Little Man lost his life far too soon. We were left in shock and disbelief over the loss. When would all these tragedies stop? It was turning out to be a terrible year. Elderly cats with problems are by their nature on borrowed time, but a comparative youngster like Littles to be struck down so suddenly was a total shock and so very sad.

Our friend Jayne from Worcester rescued Little Man from a farm where inbreeding was rife as the owners' cats were never neutered. The inbreeding caused deformities and Little Man had such a twisted neck that it looked as if his head was on back to front, poor little chap. Despite this he was so affectionate and lively and, fortunately, able to manage to eat.

Jayne brought Little Man to us in 2012. Our vet, not long after his arrival, was able to operate on Littles, as we called him, and miraculously, when a large polyp had been removed, his head straightened up and he looked like a normal cat; in fact he grew to be a very handsome, sleek black cat.



After the operation to remove the polyp, Littles needed little veterinary attention, so his demise was the more shocking and unexpected, when in the summer of 2022 he suffered some sort of neurological episode which rendered him paralysed down one side. It was so pitiful to see our little cat in such a state.

Littles was so lovable and funny and we miss him so much.

July

Our Bristol friends came - at last a day of socialising. We had lunch at a nearby pub and enjoyed a much needed laugh and chatter. The afternoon was spent with the cats who seemed to appreciate the visitors as much as I did. So many changes to the garden and cat numbers have taken place since the girls were last here. The area nearest the house is now used as the Fivery, leaving the old space that used to contain them looking quite desolate; we're hoping some wildlife might move in!



Lyn, Annie and Sara

Bubbles



As always at this time of year, Bubbles developed her skin allergy, What it is she is allergic to at this particular time has remained a mystery. We took her to the vet to get the usual jab, a course of anti-histamine tablets and cream to apply each day. In time the unsightly red patches disappeared.

August

Eric

Life with Eric continued to be a roller coaster; some days he would eat (never enough) and others not. We could see he was losing weight, but he still wanted fusses and attention.

About half way through the month Eric seemed to be having trouble picking food up to eat, which was strange as, straight after the dental, he was able to do so. We began to think there was more going on than mouth issues, but what?

Gradually, Eric just stopped eating all together, and, having exhausted all ideas to help him eat, we felt defeated. Eric had given up and started hiding away; we knew the time had come to let him go. We took him to the hospital where we had arranged for him to be put to sleep. There was much sadness amongst the staff at the hospital, as well as ourselves, as so much effort had gone into his treatment.

Eric slipped away and there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the right thing, however painful, had been done. We took him home for burial - a big cat with a big heart, who is much missed.

Eric came to us from Wales in 2015 where, as a stray, he had been badly treated. Despite this, Eric was a big, black friendly soul, but he did like to tease the other cats who seemed a little scared of this big boy. Because of this. Eric had his own chalet and surrounding area to himself by day, and the use of the Fivery



garden from early evening till morning when he would be at the gate eagerly awaiting breakfast. In bad weather he would shelter near the gate in an old rabbit hutch, keeping watch for the arrival of breakfast.

Up until the end of 2021, Eric enjoyed a remarkably healthy life requiring hardly any veterinary treatment, but everything changed around the end of the year when he began having serious mouth issues which became a really big and difficult problem to treat. The first half of 2022 was, for Eric, a constant round of trips to the vet trying all sorts of medications to enable his sore mouth to heal and enable him to eat.

He eventually had all his teeth out (which sometimes helps) and for a while it seemed as if did, once healing had occurred. Then it was a constant struggle to find what he would and could eat - all in all a roller coaster for us of hope and despair.

During August, Eric suddenly seemed not to be able to eat at all, we suspected something else was going on besides his mouth issues, as we could see him losing weight before our eyes. It became clear that we had lost the battle to get Eric sorted out.

When he lost his desire to be around us and started hiding away, we knew the time had come to let him go. He was gently put to sleep at the hospital, accompanied by much sadness on the part of ourselves and vet Sarah - everyone at the hospital knew Eric after his many visits. What a character and what a star - we miss him.

We had some visitors, at long last, during August which helped us cope with the sadness of losing so many cats this year, mostly elderly, but it is still hard to come to terms with and never gets any easier.



At long last Bob's daughter Dawn came with Pete and granddaughters Megan and Becca for the day. It is hard to believe that the last time we met up was almost three years ago! There was a lot of catching up to do.

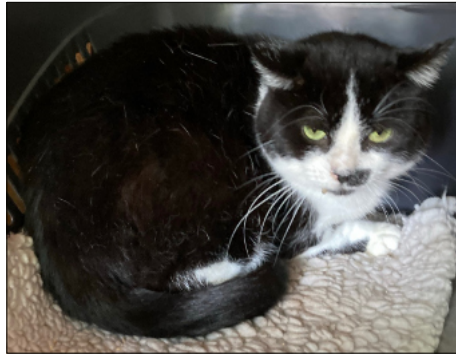


We enjoyed a lovely visit a little while later from our Worcester friends, Jayne and Alan and, this time, Dorinda whom we've not seen for several years. Renewing old friendships seems even more special after the long absences Covid imposed upon everyone.

I spent an enjoyable day visiting an old friend who's recently moved into an old property needing much renovation - always interesting to see.

Humbug

One great bit of news was that Humbug, the cat we had taken on last year but who escaped, started to be seen at the end of the garden, looking fit and well. We were so pleased to see him. We knew he was really more feral than others we have taken on, and it would seem that he is well able to fend for himself. When we put food out, the camera trap showed that other neighbouring cats were the ones to benefit, but Humbug, nevertheless, must be able to find what he needs. He's almost certainly been in the area for the past year.



Humbug when he arrived in August 2021, looking very frightened.



When he went missing we set up a shelter at the end of the garden



Humbug was spotted at the end of our garden in August 2022, a whole year after escaping.

As we put this book together in 2023, the camera trap caught Humbug having a drink by the shelter, so he is still here 18 months later and looking quite plump, so he must be able to look after himself, and he looks relaxed!





Once again the garden became full of colour for the summer.

September

Toby

We noticed that Toby was breathing very rapidly while resting in a chair. We phoned the hospital as an emergency and good job we did as Toby had lots of fluid around the heart which had to be drained.

The prognosis was not good as we were told that it would, at some point, happen again now the heart was malfunctioning; there was no way of knowing how long he would survive.

Of course he was put on medication and we also added in a hawthorn herb which is known to be beneficial for the heart.

Toby took his medications well and ambled about enjoying the warm autumn weather.

Toby had a check up after a week and seemed to be doing okay so far.

Oliver

Oliver had been finding eating difficult, so a dental was carried out and the poor little chap needed most of his teeth extracted - we had no idea his mouth was so bad!

I worried all day, given his age (15) and the fact that he's hyperthyroid and has a heart condition. It turned out to be a long op but, finally, at the end of a long afternoon, I got a call saying Ollie had come through it all well, and was now minus most of his teeth. He stayed in the hospital over night and charmed the staff with his winning ways and we fetched him home next day. Considering Oliver had so much dental work done, he coped very well straight away. What a relief!

Frankie

In September we rehomed a needy cat into our household. A large cottage with only Oliver felt rather strange (we lost all our housecats, except Oliver, during 2022). I searched local rescues looking for a cat with special needs, one who might not be going to get a home easily. Frankie fitted the bill. He's hyperthyroid, middle aged and with a skin condition. Apparently he was handed in to a vet in Chard as a stray in a bit of a state. He was found to have a microchip with up to date contact information, but upon being told that their cat had been found, his owners said they didn't want him back! Can you imagine that?

We certainly felt we could help this cat and give him the help and home he deserves. Oh, and he happened to be a lovely pale shade of ginger - I'm always a sucker for them!



Frankie when we first met him at the rescue.



Frankie settled in well at home - yes, it is the same cat!

Frankie was already on medication for his hyperthyroidism, but our vet wanted to do her own assessment, so Frankie was taken to the hospital for a blood test. His skin had got so tough that the vet could not get the blood sample as Frankie was also not being compliant, so we had to postpone the procedure for another day. When, third time lucky, vet Sarah got the sample we needed and Frankie's thyroid dose was worked out, Frankie settled into his new home, upstairs mostly at first, and seemed to favour Bob's office. We had several attempts at introducing Frankie to Oliver, so Bob made a gate for the top of the stairs so Frankie and Oliver could see each other but not mix. In time they were accepting of each other.



Sara paid another visit to catch up with the cats again.

October

Gerry

We took on a dear little elderly black female cat called Gerry from the RSPCA, who was also hyperthyroid. I had long had my eye on her since getting involved with our local RSPCA branch concerning an FIV cat we were trying to help who, sadly, didn't make it. Thinking that Gerry, being elderly and black, wouldn't easily get a home, she seemed just the cat for us.

Gerry had been a stray in Wales after her owner passed away and found herself at an RSPCA branch after surviving, goodness knows how, for some time. With no prospect of a home in view she was

moved to a Somerset RSPCA branch, where I saw her on their website and fell in love with her. The staff were delighted that she was being offered a retirement home at last. However, it was some weeks later before we were able to bring her home as she was discovered to be hyperthyroid and needed to be assessed for the correct dosage of medication, all of which took some time, plus the fact that she had a tummy upset.



Finally, many weeks later, Gerry was good to go, and we brought her home. For the first few days, however, she refused to eat, causing us much concern, so we took her into the hospital to our vet Sarah who couldn't find anything physically wrong. After a 'pick-me-up' jab and an appetite stimulant, she was put on liquid thyroid medication instead of tablets. Sarah's treatment did the trick and Gerry began her new life, eating well, trying out all the settees and chairs in the living room and lapping up the comfort of a real log fire in the evenings. This is what all elderly cats should enjoy in our view. She is an absolute poppet and makes her wishes abundantly clear! She is also very affectionate, bless her.



Toby

We noticed that Toby's breathing was rapid again and got him into the hospital where his chest was drained for a second time. We decided that next time his heart was struggling we would have to let him go as we couldn't keep putting him through the draining procedure. His medicine was increased and off we went again, knowing that it was not a question of 'if' but 'when' his heart failed again.

Every morning, going to give him his heart medicine an hour before his breakfast, I was filled with trepidation as to how I would find him. Poor Toby, he's the sweetest of cats, always eager to please and so affectionate.

Larry

Larry was not eating so well, so went to the hospital for a check-up. He had not been seen by our vets before, so a general health check was arranged. He was very nervous during the visit and tried to look small on the vet table. Vet Tony recommended a dental and he was booked in for next month.



November

Larry



Larry had a dental and stayed in the hospital over night which, apparently, he absolutely hated.

Although we were due next day for an afternoon check up with Toby and Elvis, it was suggested by vet Tony, who performed the dental, that Larry would be happier at home. So instead of picking Larry up at the time of our appointments, Bob went in specially in the morning to bring Larry back home, where he seemed so pleased to be.

Most of our cats charm the socks off the staff when they're in the hospital, but others, like Larry, are completely out of their comfort zone. Back home he soon became his natural happy self.

Toby

Toby had his check up and seemed to be alright on the higher dose of his medication.

Elvis

Elvis was examined and it was decided that he definitely needed a dental, as we suspected. It was booked in for the following month.

Fred

On the website of the rescue centre Frankie came from, I saw the cutest ginger cat with a hard luck story, and it was love at first sight! His name is Fred and he was one of a multi-cat household of 36 cats. The living conditions were horrendous. RSPCA intervened and the cats were taken away and deployed around the rescues in the area.

Fred was the last cat looking for a home at the rescue. He had so-called 'behavioural problems' - very scared and not good at using the litter tray - could we cope we wondered? Anyway, I was so captivated by



Fred when we first met him at the rescue.

Fred that we asked to see him and wondered if we would be able to get a glimpse of him as he was said to hide away. Imagine our delight when Fred came straight out of his room and gave head-bumps! We said we'd give the adoption some serious thought.

I had fallen for him, hook, line and sinker and we decided to give him a chance. The staff seemed pleased. We went to collect Fred having set up his room with litter trays filled with earth, and lots of toys.

Fred, on arrival, went under the bed, but very soon came out wanting fusses. His toileting issues proved not to be the problem we feared and he quickly made himself at home and was soon bossing us around! He does, however, hide away if he hears a strange voice, which is a shame as I'm longing to show him off to people.

Fred especially likes wildlife programmes on the TV and goes behind to see if the animals are hiding there! He does make us smile, and he's David Attenborough's greatest fan!



Fred likes to explore...



Fred likes to watch animals on TV...



Fred likes to relax with company...

December

Elvis

Elvis had quite a big dental, but coped with it well and was soon back to eating, hopefully being more comfortable. He did develop an infection post-dental, but an antibiotic injection sorted it out.

Toby

Mid December Toby was not looking good. As we were in the middle of a cold snap we put the extra heater on in the chalet along with the

usual heat pads. Not liking the look of him, we booked a vet appointment. We were unsure whether it was his old pancreatitis issue or his heart. Sadly it turned out to be the latter. It seemed that his medication had stopped working and his heart was in a very poor state. We had no option but to let him go. Poor Toby. Heart problems are so problematical; cats either do well on medication for many months or sometimes only a few months, as in this case. We miss this friendly, gentle boy. We saved Toby from a so-called rescue in Southampton where he was due to be put to sleep because of being FIV! Sadly, such ignorance of FIV still persists in some rescues, and even amongst some vets.



We brought Toby to Catwork in 2011 when he was only about 18 months old. We called him Toby since his life had been very much in the balance - "To be or not to be". Thankfully, he was to be, and spent the rest of his life with us.

Toby was a bit of a stropky teenager at first, but grew into a handsome, affectionate cat, always eager to please. He is much missed.

Amongst all the preparations for Christmas, December threw up a big surprise - Bob and I were asked to do the opening of the newly refurbished Stowey branch of the Quantock Veterinary Hospital, right opposite our home.

For the past couple of years, due to Covid and staff shortages, we have for the most part been going to the main hospital a few miles away in Bridgwater. Having the branch surgery open again is an absolute godsend. Even an operating theatre and kennels have been installed, so many of the health needs of our cats can be addressed just over the road, like in the old days.

On December 3rd we were very much guests of honour and had to perform the opening ceremony, untying the ribbon across the door.

We were very thrilled to find that the new operating theatre has been called the "Catwork Theatre".

Village folk came, some with their dogs, to view the revamped premises. There were celebration cakes and fizz and, for us, a bouquet and a beautiful vase which one of the talented receptionists had etched with a Catwork inscription and pawprints.

We had some leaflets printed showing what Catwork has been about, with pictures of the many cats whose home this has been since 1995.

Altogether a very remarkable day.



A quiet Christmas followed.

Update on the cats with us all year

The FIVs

Elvis



Elvis came from Wales in 2014 and has enjoyed good health apart from the inevitable dental issues. He had a dental in 2021 and another at the end of 2022, from which he recovered well.

Elvis seems to have mellowed with age. He seemed a bit aloof in the early days but his softer side has now emerged.

Larry

Larry was literally on 'death row' when we heard about him. The 'rescue' he had been in as a stray considered that he wouldn't suit an indoor life, the only chance many FIV cats have of being homed, so he



was booked to be put to sleep! He also had a reputation of being somewhat unpredictable.

After being brought to the sanctuary in 2021 Larry didn't take long to settle into his new life; he has even become quietly affectionate.

Georgie

Georgie came to us in 2014 all the way from Skegness where she had been living on a caravan site and fed by the site's owner. Having tested positive for FIV we were approached to see if we could take her on.

At that time we had just taken on a dear little male FIV cat, Lenny, about the same age and we thought they would make a lovely pair.

They did, and shared a chalet and garden area near the house as we felt they were too nervous to be with the 'big boys' up in the Fivory.

Sadly, Lenny died all too young having contracted an e-coli bacterial infection. After his passing, Georgie moved into the cat room extension of the house, which she shared with various occupants, currently Bubbles and Toby.



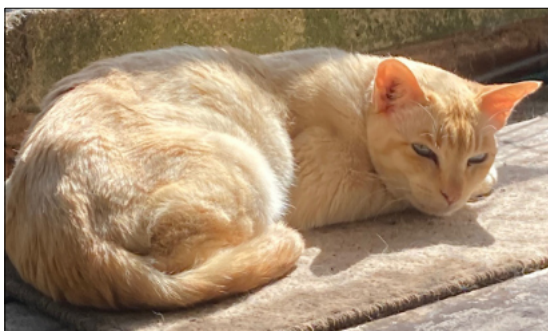
So far, fortunately, Georgie has enjoyed good health. The odd occasion when she's needed to be seen by the vet, it's been an unnerving experience for her and us to catch her. Let's hope she won't need to see the vet too much in the future.

Georgie has the sweetest nature, very gentle and affectionate to us, but scared of strangers from whom she hides, having beat a hasty retreat through the cat flap!

The non-FIVs

Toby Tonk

We offered to take on Toby, a Tonkinese, when his owner, Phyllis, a friend of ours, passed away in 2016. Phyllis' daughters had bought Toby as a present, but never having been socialised as a kitten,



he remained terrified of people, and not much company for poor Phyllis. It's such a shame he's so scared, as he can't find the confidence to be friendly, although he seems to want to be.

Very occasionally I have managed to stroke him fleetingly - quite an achievement when this has happened. Mostly he remains a 'posh feral'.

Healthwise Toby had a good year in 2022; he does, however, have a bad mouth, so all his food has to be liquidised.

Toby loves the company of other cats, which is good; it's just humans who scare him!



Even after all these years, Toby prefers to watch from the other side of the cat-flap while food is dished up.

Bubbles



Bubbles came to us in 2015, one of three 'boarders'. Their owner was being evicted and we were able to offer accommodation for them until she found somewhere else to live.

The boarding arrangement never worked out. One cat, Marmite, sadly died, and when the owner was unable to pay the vet bill for her, we took on the two cats, Fidget and Bubbles, as Catwork cats to ensure they would be looked after properly.

Bubbles is a nice little cat, always eager for attention. On the whole she enjoys good health, apart from early summer each year when she suffers some sort of allergy causing fur loss and sore red patches on her face and neck. Unfortunately, we have never been able to establish why this happens, but being the same time each year it must be some environmental event. After some treatment the allergy passes and her fur grows back again.

Bubbles lives in the cat room extension together with Georgie and Toby Tonk. The room has access to a garden area where they love to be in the good weather, sitting on the wall high up and watching the comings and goings of Castle Street below.

Oliver



Oliver, this year's front cover cat, has been with us since Christmas 2007 when a postman found him in a country lane, all alone and surviving on bird food. This sweet kitten got his name because he always wanted more!



Oliver is now hyperthyroid which is controlled by medication.

Oliver gave us a fright back in May when we noticed his breathing was all over the place one evening. Next day vet Sarah told us to get him straight to hospital where he was placed in an oxygen tent.

Having already lost several house pets around that time, our feline troubles seemed never ending. Fortunately, the vets were able to stabilise Oliver and he is now on permanent heart medication as well as his hyperthyroid tablets.

As if this wasn't enough, the poor little chap, a few months later, needed a major dental as he wasn't managing to eat very well. I was 'on pins' all day worrying about him because of his health issues and his age.

Finally, late afternoon on the day of the dental, vet Tony called to say all was well and Oliver had come safely through the lengthy procedure having had to lose almost all his teeth.

Oliver's recovery went well and we got him back next day. Oliver has done so well having had a bumpy year with all his health issues. He has even accepted three new feline friends to keep him company in the home.

Oliver is such a sweet, gentle cat who well deserves to be on the front cover of this 2022 yearbook.

And so 2022 came to an end. As you will have gathered, it has been a really difficult year for us emotionally.

We lost three house pets: Polly (p9); Marmie (p10); and Little Man (p16).

We also lost five of our rescues: Mikey (p3); Fidget (p7); Trevor (p12); Eric (p18); and Toby (p29).

On a personal, positive note, we have welcomed into our home three amazing new feline residents: Frankie (p23); Gerry (p24); and Fred (p27). They have made a huge difference to our home and lifted our spirits.

So we now have five Catwork cats in the sanctuary and four personal pets in the house. Even after the recent additions, we have not had so few cats for a very long time!

We want to thank all our wonderful sponsors and supporters who, once again and despite hard times, have enabled us to give the Catwork cats the very best possible care.

Also a very big thank you to the Quantock Vets who have in place a brilliant team, and who give us so much support, which is much appreciated.



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

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