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THE CATWORK YEAR

**2025**

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## **Front cover**

Tinker is our front cover cat this year.

We have had this sweet, gentle, elderly lady since 2023, having rehomed her after she had lost her owner and home. She is just the sort of cat we feel drawn to.

Read about her on page 11.



## The Catwork Year 2025

2025 found us caring for older cats, made necessary by our own increasing age! FIV cats are no longer an option to take on as they are most often quite young when diagnosed. The change of focus has proved quite labour intensive as elderly cats can have more health issues and are very set in their ways!

However, we are still able to help a few oldies, the bereaved ones tugging especially at the heartstrings since they may have lost the only owner and home they have ever known before coming to us.

Our change of direction did not mean that we neglected our educational efforts on the realities of FIV, based on our experience of looking after so many FIVs in the sanctuary, as well as the experience of over 1200 FIV cat owners around the world who have put their cats' details on our '1000 FIV cats' database - [FIVcats.com](http://FIVcats.com). The site has proved helpful to many worried FIV cat owners who are able to read about others' experiences, and they usually discover that their fears about the virus are unfounded.

Thankfully, so much has changed for FIV cats since we began our work 30 years ago, and FIV cats are finding homes, albeit mostly as indoor only cats, which, of course, narrows the field somewhat for potential owners.

We like to think that our booklet on FIV cats, written back in 2011, and the still current database have proved useful weapons in the fight against the misconception about the virus.

Our large garden, which was for many years home to our FIV family, has largely gone back to nature; though the smaller section of the garden near the house is still in use as a home for Larry, our last FIV boy. This area also has an enclosed safe area where housecat Frankie likes to spend the day.

All sorts of wildlife has taken over the far end of the garden, which we view on the camera traps each day. We find ourselves watching the antics of squirrels, hedgehogs and birds, as well as an occasional fox. Who knew there was so much activity each night at the end of the garden? It's lovely to be able to watch birds visiting the feeding stations now there are no cats around (though I very much miss our lovely FIV boys).

At least we are still able to help a few needy older cats.

A few photos of wildlife spotted at the end of our garden can be seen at the end of this yearbook.

### **Where did 2025 go?**

Well, in our case, much as any other year apart from the change of direction as to the kind of cats we now look after - older ones.

January was mostly taken up with putting together the annual book to keep our supporters informed of our rescue work throughout the year.

As usual I pursued my 'other' interest in life - some theatre visits and a poetry course on contemporary poets.

One of the highlights was a visit to the donkey sanctuary in Devon - a lovely place where one can learn a lot about donkeys.



Throughout the year we had visits from cat loving friends, some of whom we hadn't seen for a long time. It was good to catch up with them all.

*In spring we toasted Barbara's birthday with a picnic at Dunster beach.*



*Toby is rather aloof when Bob's granddaughters, Megan and Becca, visit.*

*Jayne and Alan gained Toby's attention with dreamies!*





*Carol visited in August with her son, Ian. Carol and her late husband, Dave, were early and loyal supporters of Catwork. It is many years since she has been able to get out to see us, it was really good to catch up again.*



*Helen is another we had not seen for several years. She was able to visit in September with her sister, Melanie. Here they meet Frankie in his outdoor area.*



*Helen also met Georgie in the extension cat room.*

*Long term friends Lyn, Sara and Lorna managed another visit this year in October.*



*Alan and Jayne visit again in December and meet up with Woody, who is keeping a close eye on those Dreamies!*



## The Catwork cats

### Larry

Larry is our last remaining FIV boy. He came to us in 2021 from a rescue where he narrowly missed being put to sleep as it was felt he wouldn't suit life as an indoor cat (most rescues still only home FIV cats as indoor only cats). Thank goodness we heard about him in the nick of time.



Although at first Larry could be a bit 'stropy' with the other cats, he soon settled down with everybody and, over the years, has mellowed a lot. He is very affectionate towards humans.

Larry now lives in the smaller area quite near the house with a choice of chalets and one heated one in the winter, which one he, of course, chooses to use - cats aren't daft!

Larry mostly enjoyed good health during 2025, but his slowed eating showed he did need a dental in the autumn, which has proved successful and he is back eating well again.



*Larry was not relaxed at the vet's....*



*...but relaxed when back in the sun.*

## Georgie

Sweet, nervous Georgie lives in the extension with Toby, the even more nervous Tonkinese.



Our friend Kath brought Georgie to us all the way from Skegness in 2014 where she had been living on a caravan site and fed by the owner.

Georgie found her way to us as she had tested positive for FIV, although we have never been convinced she was. In fact, when Georgie was given a

health check in 2025, we did ask for an FIV test to be included, but the result was 'inconclusive', so we still don't know for sure!

When Georgie was given her 'MOT' as she was starting to look older and had a very itchy ear which was troubling her, she was found to have the beginnings of kidney problems, but no obvious cause for her itchy ear could be found.

Georgie seems fine, enjoying a fuss from us every day and even, these days, accepting a fuss from visitors, so her nervousness is reducing somewhat. She is a very pretty cat with a lovely nature.



Georgie shares the cat room with Toby Tonk



Georgie is checked by vet Sarah

## Toby Tonk

We took on Toby in 2016 after his owner, friend Phyllis, passed away. Toby had been given to Phyllis by her daughters who knew she had a liking for oriental cats. Unfortunately, Toby had never been properly



socialised as a kitten and he has remained very nervous of humans all his life. We call him our 'posh feral'!

Thankfully, Toby gets on well with other cats, so sanctuary life seemed like the best solution for the little chap.

Toby has done well here with few health issues, apart from when he needed a major dental. Catching him had to be planned like a military exercise. Fortunately for him, 2025 was a vet-free year.

Toby can often be found completely wrapped up in a blanket in one of the several beds, or tucked up next to his friend Georgie.

He is a handsome little chap and, as long as he's left alone, he seems happy enough.



*Toby still thinks that if he shuts his eyes, nobody can see him!*

## Bubbles

Bubbles came to us in 2015 along with two other cats, which was meant to be temporary when their owner was evicted. The boarding arrangement never worked out and the cats remained at Catwork. Bubbles is the only one left and now lives in the house.



Bubbles used to suffer badly from a skin allergy, which we were never able to get to the bottom of when she was in the garden, but now she's in the house she is hardly affected at all - so it must have been some seasonal environmental allergy in the garden.

Bubbles is a strong-minded little cat who likes to get her own way and is a great attention seeker.



## Toby

Toby has been with us since 2023 when his owner, who had him from a kitten, had to be hospitalised due to poor health. She had resisted medical help as long as she could as the poor lady was worried as to what would happen to Toby.



We heard about Toby's plight from a friend. As he was an older boy and hyperthyroid he wasn't easily going to find a home, so we felt we had to help. We wondered how it would work out with our existing cat family in the house, as Toby had not met other cats and had not been outside of the owner's flat except for vet visits.

We needn't have worried - after a very short settling-in period, Toby showed that he was keen to meet the other cats, and he now seems to enjoy being one of the gang. Toby also likes short forays into the very safe enclosed back garden. All in all the rescue has worked well.

Firstly we had to get Toby's thyroid checked as he had been missing his medications for some time. His thyroid status fluctuated for some time and he needed three-monthly blood tests to achieve the right dose. These blood tests used to get poor Toby worked up, and he needed to be restrained, wrapped in a towel, with vet, nurse and Bob all in attendance in order to get the blood sample. Thank goodness his thyroid is now stable and frequent blood tests are a thing of the past.

Toby is quite a character and very strong-minded. He leaps around on his long legs like a cat half his age: he is in fact approaching his 17th birthday.

Toby seems happy enough with his new life, and his owner, who sadly died soon after we took him, knew that he had found a home where he would be cared for.

## Tinker

This sweet, elderly lady, Tinker, has been with us since 2023 when the rescue from which we had already adopted two cats, asked if we would be prepared to have her as she was very 'shut down' in rescue having lost her owner and the home she knew. We said "yes" of course and went to pick her up, hoping we could help her and give her a nice retirement.

Tinker remained shut down with us for about a month, then one morning she appeared in the kitchen with a greeting - breakthrough! Since then Tinker has adopted her own little routines, confining herself to the kitchen mostly where it is quiet, and loving to be outside when weather permits, following the sun around on hot, dry days.



Tinker has been prone to urinary infections during 2025 requiring a long course of antibiotics each time to deal with the problem.

Towards the end of the year, Tinker developed a puzzling urinary problem which didn't follow the usual pattern, seeming to be an inflammatory issue. She was still given a course of antibiotics but it seemed we should investigate further, so an ultrasound scan and x-ray were performed. This revealed a thickening at the base of the bladder, but it was inconclusive as to what this was - something was obviously causing her much discomfort. Tinker was given pain relief and anti-inflammatories, even though it could have a detrimental effect on the kidneys, as she couldn't be allowed to wander about in such distress. Not an easy decision, but the medication made a huge difference; the alternative would have been to put her to sleep.

Tinker also has a monthly injection for arthritis relief. She is such a dear old lady, and is affectionate in her quiet way.

## Humbug

Humbug, our feral cat we took on in 2021, appears to be coping just fine and looks well. We had hoped when we offered to take him, that he would stay in the sanctuary garden, but he had other ideas and actually dug his way out! He was clearly more feral than we had realised.



Humbug has a little chalet at the far end of the garden where he has a bed and where biscuits are put in every evening, and water of course.

As the weather gets colder Humbug spends more time over night in the little chalet, but we have no idea where he spends his days. As we have a camera trap running every night we can track his night time visits, as well as the several other creatures that visit. It's amazing how much activity there is at the end of our garden.

Humbug, four years on, appears to be well and living the life he clearly wanted.



*Humbug has to share his water bowl with a bathing blackbird, and a hedgehog!*



## **Penny - (fostered out)**

Penny belonged to a lady in the village who had rehomed her from our vets, and she lived a quiet life as an only pet. When Penny's owner passed away in the spring of 2024, the relatives were unable to take her on or find another home for Penny.

We felt we had to help, and, as Penny was a nervous soul, we put her in the extension with Georgie and Toby Tonk - our two nervous cats.

Sadly, this arrangement didn't work as Penny clearly didn't like other cats. I had what turned out to be a good idea by asking our vet Sarah if she knew of anyone currently looking to rehome a cat. She did and linked us up with Andrea who had recently lost her cat and was willing to take Penny on. We were delighted as Andrea clearly knows a lot about cats and how to treat them.



Penny is a 'foster' cat of Catwork and has been doing really well in her new home, and seems happy.

## **New addition - Woody**

We were asked, back in the autumn, if we could help a stray cat being cared for temporarily by someone in the next village. We said we would only be able to help if the cat was elderly. We were assured he looked like an old guy, so we went to see him. The poor cat was definitely elderly and skinny but very friendly, so we agreed to take him on.



*Woody when we first met him.*



*Woody needed to be distracted with lick-e-lix in order to get the blood sample on initial vet visit.*

We booked a vet appointment the day after we brought the cat home to check him out, and surprise, surprise, he had a microchip. The microchip details told us his name was Woody and he was 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> years old. Sadly the phone number of the owner proved to be uncontactable.

Some immediate treatment was given to Woody - flea and worming and a blood test because hyperthyroidism was suspected. However, this proved not to be the case.

Not much more could be done for Woody until an attempt was made by the microchip company to make contact with the owners. He was, however, put on a gastrointestinal diet; poor absorption seemed to be the reason for his being so skinny.

He was to be weighed two weeks after being on the special diet and, when this was done, he had put on a considerable amount of weight.



All attempts to contact the owners by the microchip company were unsuccessful and so, after a month, Woody was officially signed over to Catwork.

Woody lives in the extension with Georgie and Toby Tonk, not because he is nervous like they are, but with so many male cats in the house who are quite territorial, we didn't want to rock the boat by adding another male cat to the mix.

Woody has a monthly injection to help his arthritis. He is looking much better than when we first saw him, and continues to 'eat for England'.

## The house pets

### Frankie

We rehomed Frankie from an animal rescue in Somerset in 2022 when our house cat numbers had dwindled to just one.

We wanted to help a cat (or cats) which might not easily be rehomed because of medical or special needs issues.

I found Frankie on the rescue's website. He was an older cat looking somewhat the worse for wear and was hyperthyroid, so we applied for him.

We were told that Frankie had been found as a stray and, through his microchip, the owners were able to be found; they, however, did not want him back! As a stray and being hyperthyroid, he must have been so hungry. He was also suffering from a skin problem.



We adopted Frankie and he turned out to be quite a character! He's very confident and friendly. His skin improved with treatment and he was put on thyroid medication.

Last year it was found on one of his check-ups that Frankie's thyroid medication, which had already been increased, was now not able to control the problem, so an operation was planned to remove some of the thyroid gland, which solved the problem. However, a year on from the operation, sadly, the thyroid problem has returned from the remaining part of the gland (you cannot remove the whole gland) so he is back on medication again - let's hope it is able to maintain the balance this time.

Another problem for poor Frankie was a nasty bite which couldn't be explained - a possible explanation was a rat bite when he was out in his enclosure. It took a long course of antibiotics to clear up.



*Barbara's granddaughter, Romilly, gets Frankie's attention with treats, in his outdoor area.*

Frankie loves to go outside, so every morning he virtually 'asks' to be taken out, badgering Bob until he takes him out to the garden where he spends the rest of the day in a large enclosed area no longer in use in the sanctuary. If he wasn't confined Frankie would be going off visiting the neighbours as happened when he first had complete freedom!

Frankie has grown extremely affectionate of late, loving to be around us when he comes back in the house in the evening. He's certainly a cat full of character.

## **Fred**

We adopted Fred in 2022 from the same rescue as Frankie after I saw his picture on their website, and it was a case of 'love at first sight'.

Fred also met our wish of wanting to adopt a 'special needs cat', as he had been one of a multi-cat household of 36 cats. He was very nervous, we were told, so when we went to meet him (just to 'have a look') we were delighted that he came out of his room and straight to us. Having given it some



thought (though not a lot) we phoned to say we would like to take him on. He was not good, we were warned, at using the litter tray! We felt we could cope!

When we brought Fred home he, as expected, hid under the bed in 'his room'. However, he very soon came out and interacted with us.

Fred had been returned to the rescue by the first would-be adopters after just one day, so we were determined not to let him down a second time.

Fred learnt to use the litter tray, but still has't mastered the covering up part, and just scrapes the side of the tray for what seems an eternity!

Fred repaid our faith in him and became a really affectionate soul, always wanting fusses, though he remained very nervous of strangers and would hide from visitors. Recently, however, Fred has even started to interact with visitors; maybe he has learnt that only cat-friendly people come to visit.

Fred could eat for England, but I suppose that comes from having to share the food with 35 other cats!

Fred remains terrified of being put in the carry basket, and when he has to go for his annual vaccination, the vet can probably hear him coming across the road.

Fred, like most ginger cats in our experience, is quite a character and what I would describe as "naughty but nice".



*Fred is worried when at the vets.*



*Jayne coaxes Fred down the stairs with treats.*



*He's happier in a bag.*

## **Our ongoing concern for cats in need**

Cat rescue for so many charities, especially the small ones, has become really difficult. There are many more animals needing help these days than spaces to put them. There is a huge cat crisis in this country at present due to several factors coming together to make a perfect storm:- the lack of neutering, especially during Covid, the general cost of living, and the ever increasing cost of veterinary treatment.

More pets are being abandoned and neglected than at any time rescues can remember. This situation is particularly hard for elderly pets as they are not so able to fend for themselves, and, if they are fortunate enough to find themselves in a rescue, they are less likely to get rehomed as are pretty little kittens.

Sadly, Bob and I, two geriatrics ourselves, can only help a few we get to hear about. If only we could do more, the need is so great!

Thanks to our wonderful supporters we are still 'in business', so to speak, for the few, mostly elderly cats, who have come our way.

Grateful thanks must go to our talented vets, especially our 'cat' vet Sarah, who looks after our cats, and our wonderful supporters who enable us to go on helping the helpless.

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## **Wildlife at the bottom of the garden**

The camera traps, initially set up to watch Humbug, also catch what else goes on in the garden when we are not looking!

Common garden birds of course, plus a family of hedgehogs, a pair of squirrels and a fox - so far!







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

Email: [info@catwork.co.uk](mailto:info@catwork.co.uk)

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