



THE CATWORK YEAR
2018



The Catwork Year 2018

Rocky

Our front cover cat this year

Rocky was a very special little cat, who had obviously been through tough times before he came to us in the summer of 2017.

Once his immediate health issues had been addressed, Rocky flourished for a time, enjoying his very own chalet, the garden, the other cats and visitors, not to mention regular food.

The thing Rocky did not enjoy was being put in a basket and taken to the vet. We would have to devise cunning plans to catch him! Once at the vets, Rocky would curl up small - like a hedgehog in defence mode; the vets would not believe what a cheeky live wire he was back in the garden.

Rocky's trips to the vet became more frequent as 2018 wore on. He needed a major dental, had very bad skin issues and began to lose weight, indicating something more serious going on.

Despite his many issues, Rocky the resilient remained bright and active to the end, which came in February 2019. After a full supper, Rocky put himself in his comfy bed where he peacefully passed away.

We only had Rocky for a short while, but this little cat made a big impression - we really miss him! (See p32-33)

Amazingly, yet another year has passed - the 23rd for Catwork. The sanctuary seems to have been as busy as ever, and there has been progress with the information side of our work. The cats here, as ever, have given us both pleasure and concern, in roughly equal measure!

There has been sadness, with the loss of family members, Catwork friends and supporters and, inevitably, some of our feline family. But we have also met new people, both some who support us and some who have been helped by our information efforts.

Our supporters, as always, have done exactly that - support us - both with sponsorship and moral support, for which we are so grateful. We really couldn't do any of this without you all. Cats' lives have been saved across the world, because you care enough to help us.

Last year's new format for the yearbook seemed well received, so we have continued in a similar way this year. So we give you a chronological 'diary of events' as well as a review of all the individuals here. We hope it gives you a picture of life at Catwork.

Happy reading...

JANUARY



Marmaduke

The year began with some concern about our oldest housecat, Marmaduke, who, we noticed, was drinking a lot. A blood test was arranged over the road where, every Tuesday afternoon, a nurse comes out with a vet to run such routine tests.

Marmaduke, however, got himself so stressed that they couldn't manage to get the blood, so he had to go into the hospital and have a light sedation in order to get the blood for testing. The result was as suspected, the beginnings of kidney disease. This could be helped with a special kidney diet, but Marmaduke, the ultimate fussy cat, would in no way eat it. It is in fact a job to find anything he will eat two days in a row! All we can do to support the kidneys is give him my famous eel serum homoeopathic remedy.



Herbert

Having failed to find a trustworthy home for this handsome local stray we took in at the end of last year, we decided to keep him and to integrate him as a housecat. However, after a few days we had to admit defeat as Marmaduke and Coco

became very scared of him, especially Coco, who went and hid under the bed and would not come out.

Reluctantly, Herbert was returned to the garden, where he has his own chalet, and adjusted quite quickly to living with the other cats, who were not scared of him like the housecats.

As time went on, we realised it was just as well we hadn't been able to find him a home, as he turned out to have a bad digestive problem and needs medication and special diet - he turned out to be a 'special needs' cat after all! Rose, the lady he'd adopted in the village, became his sponsor and visits him every month.



Johnny

The youngster we took on from a vet in Essex last year was already in need of a dental and had to have eight teeth removed.



Trevor

Trevor was still having problems eating since his dental before Christmas, despite being given much pain relief. We decided to take him to a homoeopathic vet in Taunton for some alternative advice and treatment.

To get the right remedy for Trevor we had to relay as much information as possible about him - character, likes, dislikes etc. The remedy we did get prescribed certainly seemed to help. The joy of homoeopathic treatments is that they can be taken alongside conventional medicine. Anyway, Trevor was soon back eating again, which was great as he loves his food.

January brought the first of many bereavements we were to experience this year - the death of Mary Maguire, a cat friend of long standing. She was such a vivacious, colourful lady who was passionate about cats. I went to her funeral mass at the Catholic church in Bridgwater.

Unknown to me at the time, we were later to receive a bequest from Mary for Catwork, which was completely unexpected, but made a nice 'cushion' for Catwork finances, and for which we are very grateful.



Mary on a visit a few years ago

Another cat friend, Gill, whom we've known since the early days of Catwork, came for a visit and we had a good old 'cat chat'.



Gill visits with Charles to see the cats

The most memorable day of dreary January was a visit with my daughter and family to Hardy's cottage in Dorset, where readings and music of the time were held in the parlour.

It was a lovely winter's day as we picked our way through the woods, as Hardy would have done on his way to school, until we reached the cottage where he was born and brought up.

Dora and I sat on the wooden settle in the smokey room to listen to fiddle music and readings from Hardy's work. It was very atmospheric and, Hardy being one of my favourite poets, it was a day to remember.

F E B R U A R Y



Justin and Jemma were both a bit off colour and not wanting to eat. Since Justin has the leukaemia virus, it's always worrying when something is amiss with him, particularly.



Fortunately, the treatment they were given soon got both cats back on track.



Mr Felix Pepperpot

Pepps began to be a bit off colour on a couple of occasions, so we thought we should get him checked out at the hospital. An ultrasound revealed he had a tumour on the liver - no wonder he'd been under the weather lately.

Before coming to Catwork in 2015, this characterful little cat was a stray being fed by two people (unknown to each other) in Stourbridge. Danielle called him Felix, and Sally-Anne called him Pepperpot.

One day, when Sally-Anne was away, Pepps turned up, injured, at Danielle's, and she called the RSPCA who took him to their centre for treatment and blood testing, since he was an unneutered stray male. Pepps turned out to be FIV positive, which put him on 'death row' unless somebody was prepared to offer him an indoor home.

By now, Danielle and Sally-Anne had met up and realised they had both been feeding the same cat. Independently of one another, they set about trying to get Pepps out of the clutches of RSPCA and save his life; both found our website and emailed for help. We agreed to take him if they could get him released. Sally-Anne offered Pepps a home (ie Catwork) and after much nail biting discussion, the powers that be agreed to let her have him after neutering and vaccinating him.

Next day, Sally-Anne and husband, Andrew, brought him to us - a lucky escape for Pepps.

Pepps flourished here in the Catwork garden. He loved his food and he loved attention.

At the end of 2016, we noticed Pepps was drinking a lot and, suspecting he might have become diabetic, tests were done and our suspicions were confirmed.

Once Pepps was stabilised and the daily amount of insulin worked out, he did well.

During 2017, Pepps went blind - often a consequence of diabetes - but he coped well since he was so familiar with his surroundings. When, in 2018, an ultrasound scan revealed a tumour on the liver, with great sadness, we had to have him put to sleep.



Mr Mog

We were just getting to grips with the loss of Pepps, when Mr Mog, unusually for him, became poorly and not wanting to eat. Vet Amy said he needed a dental, which was arranged for a couple of days later. In the meantime, we grew alarmed

at how ill Mr Mog looked and, assuming his mouth was painful, told him that soon he would be fine once the dental was done.

The dental, however, never happened, as pre-op blood tests revealed something seriously wrong, and Mr Mog was deteriorating fast. Mr Mog, it would seem, had serious liver problems, just like Pepps.

We went to the hospital in disbelief to say goodbye to him as nothing

could be done and were shocked to see him so ill. Clearly recognising us, poor Mr Mog couldn't even stand - it was tragic to see this once bright, comical cat in such a state. We had a sad parting, the more so as it was so unexpected, and Mr Mog was put to sleep.

Mr Mog came from a rescue in Bristol in 2011, called the Moggery - a great name but not such a great rescue in as much as FIVs were considered best off euthanased! Luckily for Mog, he was allowed to come to us. Mr Mog was originally called 'Alcatraz' - the rescue, at that time, was working through prisons for naming their cats! Well, we couldn't live with that, so he became Mr Mog after the Moggery he'd come from.



Mog was a delightful cat, a bit of a loner, but very playful and a real character. A characteristic pose of his was to put his head down on the shelf and stick his back end up in the air! Mog used to follow Bob around the Fivery as he did chores.

We have to console ourselves that Mog might have been put down back in 2011 because of being FIV; instead of which he came to us and enjoyed a happy, healthy life in the Fivery. Mog was a great cat, who'd not had a day's illness until the last week of his life.



We received a call from an Essex vet about a stray FIV cat who looked so pathetic that we said we would take him. He seemed a candidate for the oldies' cat room where we had space. His arrival, however, was delayed because of the snow in early March.

Also in February, the month of unexpected losses, a good friend who lived in the village and worked in the shop next door, died suddenly and most unexpectedly. Rose was one of life's good samaritans who would do a good deed for anyone if she could. At her funeral, there was standing room only after all the seats had been taken - it was all so sad. Rose is much missed.

After all the sadness in February, a talk at our local surgery, of all the services that the vet hospital provides, plus a quiz and tea and cakes, came as a little light relief.

MARCH

The so called 'Beast from the East' hit on March 1st and, like the rest of the country, we were plunged into bitter cold and deep snow. Although only cut off for one day, it was still a worry about not being able to get to a vet if needed. Fortunately, we had no emergencies, but doing battle with so much snow was tough - Bob had to shovel snow away from behind each gate in order to open it to enable us to feed the cats in the garden. One or two brave souls came out to see the new landscape, but most, sensibly, stayed hunkered down in their heated beds.



Holly

Holly, one of our four oldies in the cat room in the extension, and the most compromised healthwise, started giving us cause for concern. She became lethargic and not wanting to eat; not her usual bright self at all.

Sadly, by the end of the month and despite tests and medications, her many health issues got the better of her and the only kind thing to do was to have her put to sleep.

Holly came to Catwork in the summer of 2016 with her sister, Hattie, and Ginge, from RSPCA Llys Nini in Wales, where friend Mary used to work. The three oldies had been part of a multi-cat household where the owner, seemingly, was not coping. The three oldies would have been difficult to rehome, but the other seven were.

Despite warnings that little Holly was not in good health - she had heart and kidney issues - and was elderly, and FIV, we had to give her

a good 'retirement' in the cosy cat room along with sister Hattie and little Ginge.

Little Holly was possibly the most active of the trio and would often venture outside while the others stayed in. She was a sweet natured pretty little cat and did so well on her medications which kept her going as long as nature allowed.

She did indeed seem to enjoy her retirement.



Solo



Solo's mouth was bad again and she had to have a dental where six teeth were removed in a difficult operation.

Vet Amy, who performed the op, was very fond of Solo who, she said, brightened up her day!

Post dental check-ups, for which there is no charge, seemed rather frequent to my mind, but Solo liked the attention, so vet and cat were well pleased!



Sid

One of Sid's eyes has always been a bit red, and because you can't be too careful with eyes, we had him checked out. All was well, thankfully, but, when in doubt, it's best to check.

Friend and supporter, Aysa, had a 'big' birthday in March, to which I was invited. Parties not being my 'thing' I at first declined, especially as it meant travelling to Windsor. My daughter, Dora, said she would drive and we could stay at her friend's house not far from Windsor. Both girls were, of course, invited to the party. During the day of the party in early March, Dora's friend, Lavinia, took us to Kew Gardens - my first ever visit - and we saw some interesting exhibitions.

Aysa's party, after all, was most enjoyable, with a sit down meal and string quartet, all happening in a lovely historic hotel.

I met up with cat friends of Aysa's I already knew, and met others I'd heard about. A good time was had by all.

Next day, it being Mothering Sunday, we stopped off at my son Ted and Anna's place in Windsor, where I met Anna's mum for the first time, not having been able to go to the wedding last year in Poland.

After brunch at Windsor Farm Shop, it was time to head home - quite a weekend!



Barbara and Aysa at the party

Eddie's arrival...



Eddie, the cat we agreed a few weeks ago to take from a vets in Essex, was finally brought to us, having been much delayed by all the snow problems at the beginning of the month.

When he arrived, he was nothing like his picture - the sad little face in the photo made us feel so sorry for him, and we pictured him as a candidate for the oldies' cat room. Eddie, in real life is quite big and energetic, so it had to be the Fivery for him. He turned out to be very confident and soon got into the swing of things.



Vet nurse Steph and her dad bring Eddie from Essex, and meet the others here.

At the end of the month, Dora and I attended a day school on John Clare, my favourite nature poet, in the lovely setting of Dillington House near Ilminster; a lovely old house set in beautiful grounds. It was a good day and I filled in many gaps in my knowledge of John Clare. Clare is very much in vogue these days, when there is much emphasis on the natural world.

A P R I L



Albert

Albert was not doing well and had to be hospitalised for tests which revealed he had high blood pressure. He was only on his medication for a couple of days when we found him collapsed on the floor after breakfast one morning. We rushed him to

the hospital as an emergency and were devastated when an ultrasound revealed a tumour on the kidney, and he had to be put to sleep.

Albert had been found wandering, thin and hungry, in Bridgwater in 2016, and was taken to our vets. He was treated and found to be hyperthyroid. Albert was put on medication, and vet Dee tried desperately to find him a home - not easy as few people want to take on an elderly cat with health problems. Eventually, when Albert had been at the vet's for some time, I suggested he come and join the three oldies in our cat room. Dee wondered if it would work as the others were a family group, but work it did. Albert was welcomed into the fold and quickly became like one of them. Hattie, especially, loved Albert and could often be seen cuddled up with him.



Albert did well on his medication and enjoyed a nice peaceful retirement until the spring of 2018 when his health issues overtook him.

Albert was a darling cat, so graceful and elegant, he almost looked as if he was made of china. He is a great loss to us all, cats and humans.



Eddie

When he arrived, Eddie had skin issues with sparse fur on his back. The vet suggested a product to put on his food to promote hair growth. This, after a short while, really made a difference.



Fidget

Generally in good health, this lovely lady seemed under the weather. She lives in a chalet in the garden, but we put her in the sick bay in the cat room to keep an eye on her and try to get her eating after some preliminary tests to try and get a diagnosis.



Polly

Polly, one of our house cats, is now getting on in years. As she seemed to be hungry all the time, I decided to get her thoroughly checked out and tested for hyperthyroidism. She behaved much better at the vets than anticipated as she hates

having anything done to her!

I was wrong, thankfully, about her being hyperthyroid and she seemed in good shape apart from a bit of a snuffle, which a course of antibiotics soon sorted out.

Half way through the month, the 2017 yearbooks were back from the printers and could be mailed out. I wondered what our supporters would make of the new format, and hoped they would like it.



Later in April, summer weather arrived - what happened to spring?

The big spring cleaning of the chalets got under way and the cats' washing machine was doing overtime.

M A Y



Baggy

Baggy was not doing so well. He had constant diarrhoea, so blood tests and an ultrasound were arranged, with the result that lymphoma was diagnosed. He was put on steroids and treatment for the diarrhoea and responded well. How long this palliative care would last was anyone's guess; but he's a tough old bird, so we hoped he could at least have the summer months with us.



Fidget

Fidget was hospitalised as she still wasn't right, and more tests were done. Vet Rhiannon was pleased to be able to tell us that nothing sinister was found.



Coco

Coco was under the weather and we took a very scared, reluctant cat over the road, where he was given a jab. Commonly known as the 'black panther', his behaviour is that of a really scared cat!

Grandson, Freddie, was born on 6th May to son Ted and Anna. The following weekend I joined daughter Dora and family in a quick visit to Windsor to see the new addition to the family. Freddie was passed around all the family members like 'pass the parcel'.



I went over the road to the monthly meeting in the library where we were introduced to a tame otter. The talk was about otters, and this one in particular, who wrapped herself round her owner's neck, delighted us in the audience. This little otter, it seems, has been in the TV series about the Durrells. It was a quite delightful evening.



My daughter, Dora, took me to 'The Little Mermaid' ballet at Taunton as a birthday treat - it was quite lovely; the set and choreography perfectly captured the sense of the sea.

On my actual birthday, Bob and I went out together for a few hours. We had a pub lunch and went to the garden centre to choose our plants for the summer for the few pots outside the back door. (Most of our large garden is given over to the cats!)

At half term week, our friend Seppo, from Helsinki, was on holiday in London and payed his customary visit to see the cats. He expressed a wish to go walking on the Quantocks and was unfortunate enough to go on a day when it was so foggy up there that not a lot could be seen, save shapes of sheep and ponies looming out of the mist. Seppo appeared to enjoy this unusual experience all the same. Walking and admiring the scenery had to be put on hold for another visit!



J U N E



Baggy

Baggy was now on palliative care, having regular B12 injections and kept on steroids; this went on for several months; he coped well.



Georgie

Georgie had little areas of hair loss around the head, for which she was given a steroid injection. We realised that exactly the same happened at the same time last year, and we wondered if there was something in the environment to which she is allergic. We noticed that the heavily scented mock orange shrub, which is in her area, was in bloom at this time - perhaps that is the culprit?



Ginge

Poor old Ginge had another eye infection to which he has been prone. We got a full health check done. Sarah, the vet, discovered a small lump in his mouth, but as it didn't appear to be bothering him, we left well alone.

The poor little chap was subjected to ointment put in his eye twice a day to clear up the infection.



Jason

Jason, funny boy, never eats well, so we got him checked out, even though we've always known about his kidney problems. He was doing okay, it seemed, but was given a 'booster' jab to perk him up a bit.



Lenny

Lenny was given his routine six-monthly check-up, which he's been having since diagnosed with e-coli virus which damaged his kidneys. His results were good.



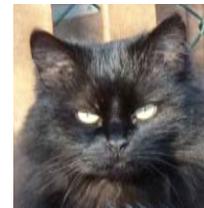
Little Man

Littles was not eating; blood tests were run and a mouth x-ray showed he had a dodgy tooth needing to come out. Post op, Littles was soon back to his cheeky self.



Rocky

Poor Rocky was really suffering in the hot humid weather, and scratched non-stop, for which he was put on anti-histamine tablets. He also badly needed a dental. The poor chap had to have 14 teeth removed! He recovered well from his big dental and was soon back eating again. His ears were apparently in a state, so we had to apply cleaner twice a day, which he absolutely hated, and would try to escape to his chalet roof out of the way.



Puss

Puss had a spot of acne on her chin which was soon sorted out by an injection.



Toby

Toby kept being sick and had to be taken to the vet - catching him was going to be a nightmare as it is impossible to even touch him!

Bob got Toby cornered in a small area, with basket at the ready and tried to pin down a frantic cat climbing up the frame of the enclosure. Bob made a grab and got him in the basket, but not before Toby had sunk his teeth into his finger! Vet Rhiannon said she would take Toby back to the hospital to do a very thorough check-up and tests to see what was causing his problem. She said Bob's wound looked nasty and he should get it checked out. On her advice, Bob went off to the small injuries unit at Bridgwater hospital where he was given a tetanus jab, an x-ray and a course of antibiotics - a great way to spend Monday morning! Toby remained in hospital for the next three days, where he was put

on a drip and given extensive tests. In hospital he was so scared, poor cat, that he 'froze', so the staff were able to deal with him without too much problem.

It seemed at the end of all this, that Toby had some kidney issues and some mineral deficiency. Once home, however, he was soon back to his normal self.

Bob took advantage of the dry weather to paint the windows of the house. He had to make a grille to put inside the open window to stop the house cats getting out. However, this also let in more noise from outside, which frightened poor Coco, who then hid!

Stan and Dot Ducker came over and we had the customary catch-up and spent time with the cats in the garden.



We received the sad news that foster cat, Oscar, had peacefully died at his foster home in Leicester, where Moira had looked after him since 2009 when we had no room at Catwork.

Oscar



Oscar was found in Dorset, lying by the side of the road. Upon examination at the vet hospital he was found, amazingly, to be uninjured; it was the fact that he tested positive for FIV that put him on 'death row'; the irony of it!

One nurse, determined to save him, rang around for help and we were contacted. However, we were full to bursting at that time, but something had to be done. Moira, up in Leicester came forward to offer to take him and we said we would pay any vet bills he incurred.

So Oscar was taken to Leicester where he did really well until the last few years.

When Oscar first arrived in Leicester, he managed to get out and ran off. However, food put in the utility room soon disappeared, and he was caught on camera coming in and eating the food - a star performance, hence his name!

It wasn't long before Oscar settled well with all the other residents (all rescues) and had few health problems, living the normal life of a cat, coming and going, and sleeping on beds.

Oscar went missing at the very end and was soon found curled up in the field near the house having, it would seem, peacefully passed away.

Thanks to the nurse in Dorset who stood up for him, and Moira who looked after him, Oscar got the life he deserved, living it to the full.

JULY

Luckily not a lot happened on the cat front this month, as plenty was about to happen on the personal front.



Jemma

Jemma needed a jab for a similar skin problem to Georgie - little bald patches - always at this time of year. As Jemma and Georgie are in adjoining areas, it increased our thoughts that it could be an allergic reaction to something in that part of the garden.



Rocky

Rocky had on-going post dental treatment, poor cat, having had to lose so many teeth.

Sara and Lyn made their annual visit together. (Sara pops down more frequently on her own now that we have Puss, who adopted her mum, here.) We had a pub lunch and lots of cat cuddles in the garden.



My older sister, Shirley, was very ill in the local hospital, Taunton. She was transferred to Exeter for more specialised treatment, but nothing could be done there either. It would seem she could not keep anything down and was too frail for surgical intervention. She wanted to come home, where I went to see her, knowing it would be the last time. End of life care was in place and she passed away three days after my visit.

Many members of the family whom I hadn't seen for years made this period a very strange one. I was to see quite a lot of them all this month as, three days after Shirley died, her husband collapsed and died of a heart attack!

The whole family was shocked and somewhat incredulous at these events. I went to two very different funerals - Shirley is buried in a picturesque village churchyard, her husband, Mervyn, cremated, wanting his ashes to be scattered on Exmoor.

Kath, our loyal friend and supporter from Lincolnshire, sadly was not able to pay her usual visit to Catwork this year, as, tragically, her husband Keith was taken seriously ill, and died. Although he was never able to visit us himself, through Kath we felt we knew him well. Kath continues her support, and we hope she will feel able to resume her visits in time. What a month!

As if to brighten our spirits when needed most, our birthday trip to the garden centre appeared to have been worthwhile, as the 'flower' pots seemed to have taken their purpose seriously!



AUGUST

Rocky



Although Rocky's big dental went well with a speedy recovery and quickly back to eating, he was losing weight and kept getting high temperatures.

Rocky really hated being put in the basket to go to the vet and tried to give us the slip if he sensed what was on the cards. Unfortunately, he had to have frequent trips to the vet at that time while we tried to get to the bottom of his health issues. Blood tests came back with a confusing picture of what might be going on and varied each time.

Herbert



Herbie too was losing weight and went into hospital for blood tests and ultrasound, which showed he had either lymphoma or bowel disease. As the treatment would be the same in either case, we felt a biopsy would be futile, especially as they are often inconclusive in such cases. Time and the medicines would be more likely to show us which of the two possibilities it was.

Louie - a new arrival



A scared little cat at a Weston-super-Mare vet threw all our intentions of not taking in any more cats up in the air as, being at a vet who thought he was too scared to be rehomed (good that they usually do home FIVs) meant he would have to be put to sleep.

The little cat had been found on a notorious estate in Weston and taken to the vet where, apparently, he hid and hissed all the time.

Having agreed to take him, Louie, as we called him, was duly brought to Catwork. He did indeed hiss a lot at first, but it didn't take long for him to realise he was safe and going to get fed, so all the hissing stopped and a very affectionate little cat emerged - quite a transformation!



Louie changed a lot in just a few months, both in appearance and temperament. He fattened up and his coat grew thick and fluffy.

Louie began, slowly, to invite attention and cuddles, which he now seems to enjoy.

We got involved in helping a lady the other side of the village, who was feeding a pregnant, seemingly stray, cat. She was wearing a broken collar, but was too nervous for Maxine to get near enough to see if there was ID. There were stables and places to hide where the cat was being fed, but we were anxious to get hold of her before the kittens were born.

All approaches to local rescues for help to trap the cat and take her in came to nothing - everywhere was full or they hadn't got a trap to lend out.

There was nothing for it but for Bob to renovate an ancient home-made trap he made years ago, and get it working again.

Before any attempt to trap the little cat, we had to have somewhere she could go. As I have a contact at Exeter Cats Protection centre, we got an assurance that, once caught, the cat could be accommodated there in the maternity wing.

Our plan worked, thank goodness! The cat was caught and our contact in Exeter kindly came to collect her, all in the nick of time as, two days later, she had two beautiful kittens.

After many phone calls, planning and worrying about the situation, we all breathed a sigh of relief.

I met a new 'cat friend', Laura, who, later, came to meet the cats in the garden. Later on Laura and I went down to Exeter to see the little family before they were homed.

S E P T E M B E R

Helen, one of our sponsors, came down for the day to visit. We spent time with the cats, but also had a look round Coleridge Cottage and garden. We had a most enjoyable day.



Helen finds the spot for Lenny



Jason

This little cat seemed to live on 'fresh air' and there was nothing he would consistently eat. He only picked at his own food and what others left.

In case we were missing something, we had him checked out; he looked fine and his weight was good. We gave him an appetite stimulant which worked a little in the short term, then he was back to his 'picking' again.

We stopped worrying about him as he was bright, active and seemed happy enough.



Lenny

Lenny had one of his regular checks where blood and urine checks are done and blood pressure monitored. This is to see how his kidneys are doing after he was diagnosed with e-coli virus. The tests were very positive.



Rocky

Poor Rocky had yet another blood sample taken to see what had changed with regard to his white cell count. When we heard that the sample couldn't be used as the blood had clotted, we decided not to put him through any more tests for a while as he gets so worried when taken away from the garden. We decided to treat him according to how he seemed.



Coco

Poor Coco had to go to hospital for the first time, to have his teeth sorted out. He had a long and difficult procedure and found the whole hospital experience quite terrifying, poor cat. On top of everything, Coco had to be kept in overnight and, according to the staff, wouldn't respond to them in any way. Poor cat must have felt we'd abandoned him. When we went to collect him, his whole demeanour changed - tail up, and genuinely pleased to see us. The recovery from the big dental was difficult also. Coco loves his food and managed, finally, to get back to normal with his eating habits - i.e. eating lots at every opportunity!



Judy gets to know Rocky

One of our oldest friends, Judy, had a birthday in September. Dora and I went to Burnham to pick her up and take her out to lunch. Judy then spent the afternoon at our house and managed to get up the garden and spend some time with the cats. Judy was pleased to see that Fidget, her sponsored cat, was sitting in the basket chair she gave us for the cat garden.



Barbara admires her surprise sunflower

We had been given two 'dwarf' sunflower seeds the previous year, which we forgot to plant, so earlier this year we stuck them in a pot, not expecting much - they amazed us by blooming!



New friend, Laura, came to visit the sanctuary, and fell in love with every cat she saw!

Dora and I went on a Coleridge study weekend at Halsway Manor up in the Quantocks. It was my present to her for a 'big birthday' coming up in December, instead of an actual present. We attended all the lectures but stayed overnight at her house as it was so close. The weekend was, sadly, very disappointing, being extremely academic, and we read not a single poem - not what we were expecting!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived in Nether Stowey between 1797 and 1799, where he wrote his, possibly, most famous poems - 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Frost at Midnight'.

For me, however, the simple pictorial poems of John Clare - writing at the same time as Coleridge - will always take first place.

While I was away for the weekend, Bob embarked on some kitchen refurbishment he'd been planning. I returned to find a whole area of wall knocked down to make the sitting end larger. Bob was hard pushed to knock down the wall and clear up as well as look after all the cats (and himself) before I returned on Sunday afternoon - I just knew what he'd been up to while I was out of the way!

OCTOBER

This month tended to be routine treatment for the cats on medication here in the garden.

I did get to see another side of cat rescue when a friend took me to see the mum cat we helped to trap back in August and had two beautiful kittens, born just a couple of days after we caught her.

I was surprised, and somewhat dismayed, that the homing of cats seems to be such a casual affair. Anyone expressing an interest in a certain cat has a while to consider it, answer all pertinent questions about their home situation and, if of the same mind a week later, is able to take said cat away with them. No physical home check is done; merely

the location looked up on Google maps.

It is my personal view that you can't really know if a home is going to be suitable for a cat, without both a preliminary visit and a follow up done. With some rescues it seems to be the 'numbers game' - quick in and quick out if possible.

This is all very well for the more homeable cats, but the more difficult ones - oldies with health problems and the bereaved are really sad cases, some of them.

I talked to friends of mine, who I knew I could trust, and each offered a home to a bereaved cat. Now two cats, thought to be difficult, are in loving homes and have a second chance. In the rescue, they were facing a very uncertain future. I feel that cats with psychological problems are not given the time they need to try and come to terms with what they have lost when their owner dies - is it any wonder they need time to adjust and need extra special help in finding an owner who is going to be patient and loving?

Apart from seeing mum and kittens, who will easily get homes, I came away concerned and saddened by the plight of some oldies.

October was the month when my health issues began. I developed a skin problem which went on for months and was very distressing. Many trips to the doctor were to no avail - three different diagnoses and different tablets and creams, all of which did nothing to alleviate the problem or even get a clear diagnosis!

On top of all this, in late October, going up the steps in the garden one morning, I tripped and fell and spent the next week in pain like I could never have imagined.

Bob had to do just about everything on the cat front as I was not able to bend down even to pick up a dish. Somehow we muddled through.



Lesley brought a 'biscuit' donation, and went to see the cats in the garden.

Trevor is never one to miss out on the chance of a cuddle and some attention!

Unbeknown to us at the time, another tragic loss occurred at the end of the month, although we were not to find out about it until past the end of the year. Roger, who, with Viv, have been loyal and major sponsors for years, died suddenly, very soon after diagnosis of cancer.

Roger had made mercy dashes all the way from Cheshire to bring cats down to us, and also answered calls for help from us for cats in their area, which he and Viv always took on board with dedication - we will miss him. Viv assures us the sponsorship and her support will continue, for which we feel truly grateful - Catwork has brought us real friends, so much more than just 'cat business'!

NOVEMBER



Ginge

We said an unexpected goodbye to little Ginge. He seemed to be having trouble eating and we thought he probably needed a dental. Upon examination, vet Sarah saw the small lump she had noticed in his mouth back in June, had grown really

big and was preventing the poor little chap from eating properly.

I was very upset; instead of taking Ginge for a consultation and arranging a probable dental, he had to be put to sleep there and then. Nothing could be done to remove the lump in the mouth. I wasn't prepared for this at all. Bob played nurse while Sarah put Ginge to sleep, and I just sat in the chair of the consulting room and cried. Sudden, unexpected put to sleeps are the hardest, I think.

Little Ginge had come with Holly and Hattie from an RSPCA centre in Wales in 2016, where they had been in a multi-cat household. All three settled so well into the oldies' room attached to the house.



Ginge was a feisty, characterful little cat, but very lovable. He underwent an eye operation while with us, to prevent eyelashes rubbing against the eye which, apart from being very irritating, was also causing him eye infections.

He coped with the 'bonnet' well as I had managed to find a fabric one. Ginge managed to turn it inside out, making him look like a grumpy choir boy; but it served its purpose of preventing him scratching the wound.

Ginge, just like the girls, welcomed Albert, an elderly stray from our vets, into the fold. The little gang of four could sometimes be seen all on the same mattress bed in the sunny window.

Ginge also liked sunbathing on the ledge outside their room. He was a great character - typical confident little ginger guy.

The effects of my fall in the garden got better in time, but the skin issue got worse. With the doctor not coming up with anything to help, we went to see a dermatologist, who put it all down to neurological problems. Armed with yet more specialised creams and tablets, all I could do was try and contain the intense itching, which kept me awake at night, making me more and more exhausted.

We reached our 37th wedding anniversary in late November. We did our usual trip to Dunster on what must have been one of the wettest days of the winter, to try and find some Christmas presents.

A birthday treat for my daughter finished off November, with a trip, preceded by a meal, to the ballet, 'Beauty and the Beast'.

D E C E M B E R



Baggy

This old boy, blind and tough as old boots, came to the end of his long life, and had to be gently put to sleep towards the end of the month. He was going off his legs and deteriorating, having done so well, against all expectations, when he

was diagnosed with lymphoma back in May. We had him on palliative care and 'bought' him the summer, which he seemed to enjoy, and half the winter too. Giving him his medication had been a two person job, me holding a squirming blind cat, and Bob doing the pill popping straight into his mouth, both in the morning and evening.

Baggy also had regular B12 injections. All his medications kept him going for almost eight months - didn't he do well?

Baggy came to us in 2012, already quite elderly and blind. He was a local cat, but when his owner had to sell the house and move into rented accommodation, she wasn't allowed to take the cat.

We were asked to help, and took him in - one of our special needs cases. Baggy had various companions: little elderly Jemima from the vets, then Brandy. By this time the oldies' cat room was finished and Baggy and Brandy lived together there.



After Brandy died, we tried to incorporate Baggy into the household, but Coco and Marmaduke were scared of him and we couldn't get it to work.

Bob even cut the door to the living room in half, creating a stable door, to stop Baggy pursuing the cats into the front room and standing over them when in the litter tray.

Baggy went back to a garden chalet, where the female cat contingent kept him in his place!

Baggy seemed to like being able to be in the garden when he chose, and he had his own little, cosy pad.



Kim re-acquaints herself with the new Shadow

Kim, who'd rescued Shadow, came, with Laura, on a visit and was amazed and delighted to see how Shadow had changed. The once terrified cat is now a friendly little soul wanting attention like the others.

Christmas cards and donations - thank you to everyone - had been flooding in since early November. Many cards were sent in return, keeping us extra busy!

Our friend Jayne did her usual 'Santa run' down to Somerset, with gifts for us and all the cats.

Jason, as usual, got his own special goodie bag from his 'auntie' in Worcester, who used to feed him, along with other strays in Worcester cemetery, where he had lived for three years!

We had a great time watching the cats getting stuck into their presents and even opening some that contained treats.



'Santa' Jayne brings her Christmas goodies and wonders if the cats will be interested



She soon sees the answer as the excited gang investigate the packages



Herbie decides to open the treats without waiting for them to be distributed!



Jason finds his special goodie bag

Christmas was a quiet affair - just the two of us, and the cats.

The year ended on a nice note for me, with a trip to Killerton National Trust property, where each year the house is decorated with a book theme - this year "The Snow Queen". It was a lovely way to spend New Year's Eve.

Well, that was the year that was...

We said goodbye to seven cats: **Pepps** (p4-5); **Mr Mog** (p5-6); **Holly** (p7-8) **Albert** (p10) **Oscar** (p16-17) **Ginge** (p25-26) and **Baggy** (p26-27).

We said hello to two cats: **Eddie** (p6+9); **Louie** (p19-20).

That leaves just 25 of the others... read on for an update.

UPDATE ON CATS WITH US ALL YEAR

The FIVs

Trevor

Trevor came to us in 2011. He had been lucky, having been taken to a veterinary practice in Southampton with a good attitude to FIV cats, which Trevor was; in fact, the staff got really fond of him as he's a lovely boy.

Trevor has enjoyed good health; his one problem has been his teeth, having had several dental treatments.

At last, he seems to be all sorted out and enjoying life in the garden. Trevor is usually popular with the visitors.



Toby

Toby arrived in 2011 from Southampton, as a very young FIV positive, who would have been put down at the 'rescue' he ended up in - obviously a very unenlightened one. A helper took on his cause and contacted us, and we said we'd have him.

Toby has grown up here at Catwork - a once stropky youngster has matured into a quiet, affectionate older cat. Toby's health has been good this year.



Elvis

Elvis arrived in 2014 from Wales where the rescue dealing with him was unable to accommodate him.

Once he had settled in, Elvis became one of the gang.

He is very fond of his food, is friendly but doesn't like to be over fussed.

Elvis had no health issues during 2018.



Eric

Eric, also from Wales, where he was being abused, came to us in 2015. He's a lovely boy, but a bit of a 'tease' around the others, who don't quite know what to make of him, and some are frightened of him. Eric, therefore, has a large area

all to himself, thus avoiding confrontations. He has the freedom of the Fivery garden during the evening and night when the others are in their sleeping areas. Always at the gate in the morning, off he trots to his chalet for his breakfast - he loves his food.

Eric has not had any health issues and, considering he was mistreated, he's a very laid-back fellow.

Shadow

Shadow has been with us since 2016 - probably one of the most nervous cats we have had. He had joined a feral cat colony down in Devon that had to be moved. All were tested, and Shadow was the only one to test positive for FIV.

Had Shadow not been so terrified, he would have been put up for homing as an indoor only cat, but his extreme, terrified, behaviour made that impossible, so he would have probably been put to sleep if we hadn't taken him.

Time was the one thing Shadow needed to adjust and for his real sweet nature to emerge. This has taken him a long time, but time is what we were able to give him.

Shadow, after quite a while, began to relate to myself and Bob, but ran away and hid when he heard strangers.

Last year, a fully adjusted Shadow finally appeared, relating to visitors



and being very visible with the others, and no longer hiding.

The Shadow experience has been so rewarding, seeing him grow in confidence and trust. Luckily, so far, Shadow has had no health problems.



Johnny

Johnny was brought down to us from a practice in Essex, where he had been taken as a stray in 2017.

He's a strange little cat (or, rather, big cat now - he's grown so much) who is fine with humans, but a little worried around the other cats. Johnny seems antagonistic towards anyone invading his space, but also scared of them at the same time. He hasn't quite worked out where he fits into life in the Fivery, and tends to keep himself to himself. He has a chalet on his own. Apart from a dental at the beginning of the year, Johnny has been fine.

Rocky (This year's front cover cat)

We took Rocky in summer 2017, at the request of our Berkshire rescue friends who do not cater for FIVs. He had gone into a trap set for another cat, and was found to be in a very bad state, so much so that he couldn't be neutered until after he came to us and had finished his antibiotics.

Rocky improved dramatically and looked so pleased to have a little home of his own in the garden. He also got on well with the other cats.

During the summer of 2018, Rocky needed a major dental; 14 teeth needed to be removed! He made a good recovery from the dental.



He also needed his ears cleaning on a regular basis, which he would try and avoid at all costs. The hot humid weather played havoc with his skin, and he was on antihistamine to help with the scratching.

As the year progressed, Rocky was not doing so well, and tests, of which he had several, were never conclusive enough to know exactly what was going on.

He was put on steroids as he was anaemic at one point, but he remained a lively and happy little cat, dashing about the garden.

A comment from one of the nurses about Rocky on collecting him from hospital one day: "I bet he could write a book", that is the sort of cat Rocky is.

Stop press: In mid February 2019, Rocky put himself to bed after supper and died during the night, lying comfortably on his cushion. He is a huge loss to us, and much missed - a little cat but a big character.

Sid

Sid, so called as, initially when he came in 2017, he never stopped hissing, followed hot on the paws of Rocky. Both arrived, at different times, in a taxi all the way from Berkshire - friend Bev, who runs CLAWS rescue has a taxi service lady in her village.

Sid was being fed by an elderly lady and, when she went into hospital, a young couple took over feeding, but realised Sid should be taken into care. We agreed to take him.



As usually happens, it wasn't long before Sid stopped hissing and, knowing he was safe, joined in the life in the Fivery.

The couple who'd been feeding him were in the area later on in the summer, and stopped by to see him. They simply could not believe that this was the same cat they hadn't been able to get within a few feet of. I had told them he would sit on their lap and indeed he did. It's always amazing what change, security and routine will bring about. Sid, after his period of strydom in Berkshire, had a good 2018.



Lenny

Little Lenny was brought to us in 2014, by a vet working at a practice in Weston-super-Mare, to which he had been taken by the neighbour of the owners who had moved out and left him behind!

Sometime after they'd gone, the lady realised Lenny had been left to fend for himself and, in the attempt, acquired FIV - he, a mere youngster, would have been no match for a streetwise, bully cat.

Lenny, naturally enough, had become very scared. Once here, the magic of time and routine got to work and, like so many before him, Lenny grew in confidence and grew into the cheeky little cat he was always meant to be.

Unfortunately, Lenny contracted e-coli virus and was very ill - so poorly we thought we might lose him.

However, with expert veterinary care once the diagnosis had been made, and the correct medication (which is permanent) was in place, Lenny turned the corner and is today well, despite the kidney damage that has occurred. Every few months he has blood and urine tests done, and blood pressure monitoring to check how he's doing. So far, he's doing quite well, bless him.

Georgie

Sweet, nervous, little Georgie came shortly after Lenny in 2014, which was great timing as they are two of a kind - younger and more nervous than the other FIVs - so they were able to live together, sharing a chalet and little garden area near the house. We thought they would be overwhelmed and frightened by the 'big boys' up in the main Fivery garden.

Georgie was a little stray living with her



brother who, sadly, got run over, in a caravan park up in Skegness, where the owner was feeding her and providing shelter. She searched for somewhere more suitable for Georgie, and that was Catwork. Friend and sponsor, Kath, brought Georgie down to us on one of her summer visits.

After Georgie had settled into the routine in the security of the sick bay (where new cats go initially) we moved her down to the chalet near the house with its enclosed garden, and where she joined Lenny.

Georgie has good health, but each year, at the same time, she seems to get a short-lived allergy to something in the garden, but we are not sure what it is - very strange.

Georgie and Lenny really do make a lovely pair.

Special needs and others

Justin & Jemma

Justin

This little pair, almost certainly brother and sister, have been with us since 2016. They were found in a taped-up box outside a supermarket in Weston-super-Mare, and taken to a local vet. Little Justin's life might have ended right there as he tested positive for Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) which, when it 'kicks in' will dramatically shorten a cat's life.

Fate intervened as, on duty at the time, was a vet nurse who lives in our village and asked if we could help the little guy, to which we agreed. Already, Justin has had nearly three years he wouldn't have had, so that has got to be good. He's such a sweet little cat and, obviously not having had a good home to start with, we are so glad to have helped him to have what time nature dictates. There is always the worry with leukaemia virus that one never knows when the time bomb of the



virus will actually be triggered. In our experience the average age for a cat with FeLV to reach is around 5 to 6. Kittens who are tragically born with the virus, rarely make it beyond their first birthday.

So far so good for Justin, but one can never be complacent about FeLV cats. Long may he continue to do well!



Jemma

As already mentioned, little Jemma was in the box with her brother but, unlike her brother, she tested negative for leukaemia virus. She was separated from Justin by the vets, causing her distress, it seems. As the vets were unable to find a rescue to take Jemma, we said we would have them both. As they had lived together, there seemed little point in separating them now. It is likely that Jemma has her own immunity to the virus. Three months later, we retested them both

and the results were the same - Justin positive, Jemma negative.

So, here they are, sharing a chalet and garden area together. Jemma is a nice affectionate little cat who's doing well.

Jason

Jason is doing well even though he appears to live on 'fresh air' and has kidney issues. As he won't eat the food which would be good for his kidneys (or much else, for that matter) all we can give to help is our famous kidney support, eel serum.

He has been with us since 2015, having come from Worcester, where he had lived for three years in the cemetery along with other strays, and fed by a band of animal lovers, which included friend Jayne. It was when I was spending a few days



with Jayne and going with her on a feeding trip, that I saw Jason and offered to take him on as he was drinking a lot - a clear sign of kidney issues. Jayne's vet checked him out and we were correct in our assumption; in fact the prognosis was quite poor for Jason, so we're thrilled that he's still here, enjoying life with his friends, and doing well.

Solo

We took on Solo, in 2015, because she had tested positive for leukaemia virus on a first in-house test, and, indeed, all the symptoms she was displaying - really bad mouth, extreme diarrhoea etc - would seem to back this result up.

Solo was on much medication when she first came to us, but nothing seemed to bother her. She loves people and gets on well with the other cats.

Solo's owner, a breeder, had had a stroke and all her cats had to be rehomed. Solo and others went to a rescue in Oxfordshire, and from there to us.

To the surprise of everyone, ourselves and the vets, Solo's second test for leukaemia virus, done at an outside laboratory, came back negative! Very good news for Solo. It seems what she had been suffering from was calici virus; this can flare up from time to time, but can be treated.

She had a complicated dental in 2018, during which she was the darling of the vet practice - a real fluffy white charmer.



Fidget and Bubbles

We took on these two cats in 2015, as a temporary arrangement, until their owner, who was being evicted, found somewhere to live.

The boarding arrangement worked for a while, but then broke down, and communications lost with the owner. We realised she could not afford them in her new situation, so we took them on as our responsibility - they stayed! (See next page)



Fidget

Fidget is a quiet, middle aged lady who likes to keep herself to herself, but is friendly to people. She has a little chalet all to herself and likes to spend a great deal of time in a basket chair, which is lovely, as it was our friend Judy who donated the chair, and Fidget is her sponsored cat.

Earlier in the year, Fidget was a bit unwell, but tests were done and, thankfully, nothing serious could be found. She soon got back to her normal self.

Bubbles

Bubbles, a very small cat for her age (approx 4-5) is in good health and doesn't really need to be here, not having any 'special needs'. However, she does a good job playing with Toby, who certainly wouldn't be rehomeable.



Toby

Toby, a Tonkinese, belonged to Phyllis, a friend of mine of many years, who, when she died in 2016, had nowhere to go, being scared stiff of people.



Phyllis' daughters had bought Toby as a present for their mother when he was about 18 months old.

It would appear that Toby might have been bred for money; he was completely unsocialised and spent a great deal of the time hiding in the airing cupboard, frightened of all the carers coming and going. When Phyllis died, neither daughter was in a position to take Toby, so we felt we had to step in for Phyllis' sake - she had been a good friend to Catwork.

Toby remains extremely frightened of people to this day, but gets on well with the other cats in the security of the enclosed garden area.

Toby had a puzzling health problem in the summer (see page 15) but once diagnosed and treated, he returned to his normal self. In the hospital he was too frightened to put up any resistance to whatever was done to him - he just froze, poor little cat!

Puss

This lovely lady had adopted friend Sara's mum when a stray in Bristol. Sara and her mum, Janet, got her sorted out - dematting, vaccination, microchipping, and started feeding her up. Janet had not had a 'special' cat before, but Puss was to change all that, and wormed her way into her affections.

Sadly, Janet became too ill to care for Puss, and Sara herself was not in a position to take her on. When I realised they were actively seeking a home for Puss in Bristol, we offered to take her.

Puss being here means that Sara and her mum have been able to keep in touch with their rescue, who is doing well.

Puss loves her cosy chalet with access to the garden, and isn't bothered by the other cats. How a beautiful, nice-natured cat like Puss could have become a stray is a complete mystery.





Hattie

Little Hattie is the only one remaining of the trio of elderly cats we took from a multi-cat household, who would have been difficult to rehome. They came to Catwork in 2016 for their retirement, which they seemed to enjoy.

Hattie was always the fittest of the three and remains in good health.

Having lost all her cat friends in 2018 at different times, by the end of the year the poor little cat was all alone in the cat room.

What to do? We opened up the adjoining area where the youngsters,

Lenny and Georgie live, and it wasn't long before Lenny was popping through the cat flap and spending time in the cat room with Hattie. It took Georgie a bit longer to venture in, but now they divide their time between the oldies' room where Hattie lives, and their own chalet. Lenny has his work cut out keeping elderly Hattie and young Georgie happy! Hattie doesn't need to be lonely any more.

Update: you will see from the last pages of this yearbook, that 2019 brought Hattie a new companion, Mikey. Read about Mikey's story on pages 45-46

Herbert

Herbie, as we call him, was the frightened and hungry stray being fed by Rose on the other side of our village last winter.

We caught him, got him neutered and microchipped, and tried to find him a home. This did not materialise, however, and as Christmas was upon us, we decided to try again in the New Year, but then again, perhaps he could join our house cats?

We brought Herbie into the house but, unfortunately,

Marmaduke and Coco were frightened of him; Coco so much so that he ran upstairs and hid under the bed all day - it was a job to get him out! It wasn't going to work, so Herbie, sadly, had to go back to the garden where he does have his own chalet and seems fine with the other cats.

As 2018 rolled on, we realised it was a good thing for him we hadn't rehomed him as he has ongoing stomach issues. His constant diarrhoea led to an ultrasound, which couldn't determine whether he has a lymphoma, or IBD (Inflammatory Bowel Disease). As time has gone on, we suspect the latter as he has put on so much weight and looks in great shape.

Herbie is on permanent steroids and diarrhoea medication, and a sensitivity diet. Although not FIV himself, he has more issues than most of the FIVs he shares his life with!

It's just as well we didn't home him, because he turned out to be a 'special needs' cat after all.

Rose, the lady he adopted, sponsors Herbie and comes to visit him every month. He's a lovely cat, we're glad we've been able to help him.



The House Cats

Marmaduke

We have had Marmie since 2002; a kitten of about eight weeks old, found on the village by-pass, unable to walk because of an old leg injury that had begun to heal, but badly.

Vet Colin was able to fix his leg (there was a possibility he would have to amputate) and Marmie, after an initial period of cage rest, has been jumping around ever since.



At the beginning of the year he was diagnosed with the beginnings of kidney failure, but there's no way he will eat the renal diet (or much else for that matter). All we can give him to help his kidneys is our favourite eel serum homoeopathic remedy. For the moment, Marmie seems to be doing alright. He's a very friendly, affectionate little chap and can never have enough attention!

Coco

Our big, beautiful, scaredy cat Coco needed a few visits to the vet last year, much to his concern (it was only over the road). Imagine the state Coco was in when he had to go to the hospital for a major, complicated dental. The poor cat had to stay in overnight as well, which upset him even more. If cats can smile, that's certainly what Coco did when we went to pick him up, and he came out of his sulk he'd been in during his stay in hospital.



Coco has been with us since 2011, when I brought him back from Eastbourne where, as a stray, he had been rescued by a lady who was terminally ill and desperate to find him a home - she did, with us.

Polly

Back in 2006, Polly was a stray on the other side of our village and we were asked for help with her - she ended up staying with us.

Polly ran away the first time we let her out - she's easily spooked - but we got her back two weeks later, since when she's been an indoor cat.



Polly has two other indoor cat companions - Oliver and Little Man - who do tease her a bit. She has enjoyed very good health apart from a winter snuffle she seems to get, which is soon sorted.

Polly and Coco are in great competition each winter evening to be the first to get the pouffe in front of the fire. Polly likes her creature comforts.



Oliver

We have had Oliver since a kitten when he was found by the postman in an isolated spot, back in 2007, at Christmas time. He was another little stray who stayed. Oliver, like Polly, likes his creature comforts. Healthwise, in 2018, Oliver had a good year.

Little Man

Littles was rescued by friend Jayne from a farm in Worcester in 2012, where so much in-breeding had happened that the poor little chap had a neck that was so twisted that he looked positively deformed. Despite this, Littles was ever the loving, cheeky chappie he still is.

Vet Colin removed a large polyp from Littles' ear and his neck straightened up beautifully.

Littles needed a dental in 2018, but had no other issues. He's a strange little cat, but very lovable.



What progress in changing attitudes about FIV?

Every year we are in touch with people all over the country and abroad, seeking advice for their FIV cat, which means that we get a good idea of what's going on with regard to attitudes to FIV in both rescues and veterinary practices.

Attitudes still vary. Although much better than when we first started, it is still a mixed bag out there, so the chance of life after FIV diagnosis very much depends on where the cat ends up - a lottery of life and death, in fact.

We are always delighted to hear that a cat has been saved because the owner has researched the subject of FIV and may have found our website and got in touch.

However, we still get extremely angry and disheartened when we hear that an FIV cat has been put down by some ignorant vet, causing much distress to the owner/rescuer.

We had one such case up in Yorkshire in 2018 where, as has happened before, the rescuer got involved with the local Cats Protection group to get his rescued stray cat neutered. On finding the cat to be FIV positive it was put down, that being the policy of that particular group.

The rescuer, who had thought he was helping the cat, was devastated, and contacted us, vowing that he would sort the other strays - mum and three kittens - himself and not get involved with an organisation that has power of life and death over these innocent cats.



The three kittens, now young cats, enjoying a breakfast of Good as it Looks and lactose-free milk - lucky cats!

We were asked for several copies of our book on FIV so he could take them round to his local rescue groups and vets in his area. We were running very low on stocks of the book and had been wondering whether to have any more printed as the information is on our website.

Then, at this time, a really good printing offer came in, which was too good to miss. So we made a few additions to the book and had the fourth edition printed. Quite a few copies have gone out already to owners and rescues wanting to learn about the virus.

Rome wasn't built in a day, as the saying goes, so, for the present, we must content ourselves with the fact that progress is slowly being made and, as long as we are able, we intend to go on spreading the good news about FIV.

To date, there are 932 cats on the 1000 FIV cats project database we set up, whose owners know from real life experience that FIV is not the problem it has been made out to be. Visit www.FIVcats.org and take a look at these beautiful FIV cats whose owners know FIV is not a problem. They can't all be wrong!

'Stop press' for 2019

This yearbook has been all about 2018 but, as we were writing it at the beginning of 2019, we had an amazing surprise, so thought we would share it with you to round off the end of the book.

In the last week of January 2019, we had a phone message from a vet in Bath to say that they had had a stray cat brought in the previous night as an emergency, in a terrible state. The message said he had a microchip, which linked him back to us. We knew immediately that it had to be Mikey. The amazing part was that he had gone missing ten years ago!

Mikey had been a youngish stray on the Quantocks in 2008 who had adopted a lady living on the hills. When this lady had to move to Italy, she asked if we could help find him a home. As Mikey was not special needs, we fostered him out to someone we knew in the Bath area. Tragically, Mikey escaped on the very first night there. We spent much time and effort looking for him, with many visits, posters and leaflets through doors, even an article in the local paper; but all to no avail. After several months with not even a sighting, we had just to hope that he had adopted someone else.

Fast forward ten years, and to our phone message from the vet. It

seems Mikey had been found in a shed, in a very poor state, and was taken to the vets in Bath. He was put on a drip and his immediate needs were addressed - he had a large and deep abscess on his neck; he was badly anaemic and dehydrated; he had blockages in both ears, which the vet was worried could be cancerous; he was underweight and obviously covered in fleas. The vet in charge of him was quite pessimistic about his chances.

But Mikey was not about to give up now!

We drove to Bath to collect him, having arranged with our vets at the hospital to take him in as soon as we got back. We took him there directly from the vets in Bath, and vet Sarah assessed him.

Despite all he had been through, Mikey was surprisingly bright and responsive - 24 hours on a drip had obviously helped, so it was decided to operate the next morning. He had his abscess fully flushed out, he had two dodgy teeth removed, and two polyps were removed from his ears and sent off for analysis (which later came back as all clear).

Amazingly he was fit enough to come home that same afternoon - just ahead of a severe snow storm, which was beginning as Bob drove into the village with Mikey.

We installed Mikey in the sick bay in the oldies' room where he flaked out in a comfy bed and slept.

Within a week, his blood levels had recovered, he had gained weight and, although the abscess needed further treatment, he was already well on the road to recovery.

He refused to leave his new bed for several days, and really enjoyed his regular food, comfort and warmth - we will never know what he had endured through those ten years, but clearly the recent few months had been tough for him.

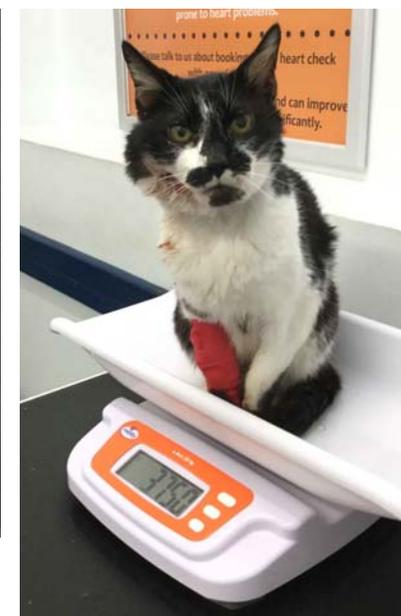
We are so happy to have him back and, although now an oldie, we hope he can have a few final years of security and comfort here.

Mikey's story is a prime example of what you all, as sponsors, enable us to do. Clearly his treatment has not been cheap, but thanks to all our sponsors, we were able to give him everything he needed by way of veterinary care and support - so thank you all for enabling Mikey to be helped back from the brink.

A great advert for microchipping, and such a positive start to 2019!



Mikey as he was in 2008



January 2019, being admitted to our vets for treatment



Just a few days later, already we can see the improvement



March 2019, showing Mikey as Hattie's new companion in the oldies' room

THE CATWORK YEAR
2018

Front cover images



Top left: When Rocky came to us in 2017, he just seemed pleased to have somewhere comfy to sleep.

Top right and bottom left: Spring 2018, he was at his best and loving the garden.

Bottom right: Later in 2018, he was losing weight and having ongoing health issues; the slow decline had started.



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

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