



THE CATWORK YEAR

2012

CECIL

our front cover cat this year

This year's front cover cat is the lovely, gentle Cecil, now quite an old boy.

Cecil was brought to us in early 2002 by a Bristol family who had befriended him as a stray, but were unable to keep him.

Cecil has enjoyed very good health until now when old age is starting to catch up with him.

Even though Cecil is hyperthyroid and has inflammatory bowel disease, he is still very bright and active.

He is very closely monitored for his conditions, being weighed fortnightly and given a B12 injection.

Cecil has a sweet temperament, is good with the other cats and much loved by visitors.



The Catwork Year 2012

Time once again, at the end of 2012, to reflect on the year just gone and report on the happenings at Catwork.

The year of seemingly incessant rain was the usual mix of personal events, the taking in of new cats needing help and saying goodbye to some old friends.

Despite the miserable weather, we had our usual visitors who invariably seemed to pick the odd dry day to come, which was lucky.

January 2012 saw us at our vets' "Pet Oscars" evening, as Billy, one of our house cats, had been nominated Pet of the Month for January 2011, on account of surviving the removal from his throat of the biggest polyp the vet had ever seen. No wonder he had been so snuffly and having difficulty eating!

Billy's breathing problems made the removal of the obstruction a tricky veterinary procedure. Billy hasn't looked back since, and now is doing very well for an elderly cat.

At the event, Catwork was awarded the proceeds from the calendar sales and a donation of what the staff would have spent on Xmas cards if they had sent them to each other - how nice is that!

February saw the completion of the little extension at the back of the cottage and the departure of our brilliant builders, who had created a utility area and "cat room" to be, out of a derelict loo and shed which, seemingly, had once been a pigsty. We are delighted with the result as the new build looks as if it has always been there, as it blends in so well.

Bob, in his 'spare time' has been busy doing all the plumbing and electrics and tiling the floor. Hopefully, by next winter a few oldies (three have

already arrived!) will have a cosy sitting room and adjoining mini garden. All very exciting, Barbara thinks.

In March, Barbara was invited to spend Mother's weekend with her son, Ted, in Norwich. She took the chance of visiting a homing centre / sanctuary nearby called Venture Farm. It was especially interesting as Venture Farm takes in FIVs and has a permanent oldies unit. Coals to Newcastle, you might think! It was lovely to see the work being done at Venture Farm who home the cats they can, but ones unsuitable for homing stay in purpose built accommodation.

If only more organisations would copy Venture Farm and give every cat a chance instead of being a rehoming business with targets to meet - yes, some organisations really do have targets for rehoming, which is why so many are becoming so selective as to what they are prepared to 'rescue'.



Maureen and Ray make an early visit in January



Maureen cuddles Marmaduke, whom she helped us save



Ray chooses little Sooty for a cuddle



Carol and Dave bring Audrey to see the cats



Barbara's daughter, Dora, visits the cats with her new family



Vera looks a little overwhelmed!

Barbara's other little mini break was with friend Maureen in Sussex, where they visited another centre that takes in FIVs - Rhodes Minnis in Kent - all very interesting and food for thought.

Back home the next big event was the wedding of Barbara's daughter, Dora, in July. Amazingly, in that wet, wet summer, she had chosen a picture perfect dry day. The Hunts had to get spruced up for the occasion - a very rare event!

The rest of the summer was punctuated by visitors and cat matters - the day by day care, replying to emails about FIV and sending out many of our FIV books.

The autumn found us helping a friend's cat and saying goodbye to some old friends in the Fivery - we had gone from January to October with no losses, then three in a row (see those who left us section).

In early November, some much needed tree surgery was done in the Fivery, which had become very dark and overgrown. Hopefully, if the sun ever returns, the cats can benefit by the garden being opened up. They seemed to enjoy the tree surgery, watching the workmen swinging



Jayne with Big Boy, her favourite



Liz and Jayne with Thomas and Big Boy



Dorinda gives her Charlie some attention



Nicky and Sophie give Little Man a game



Jasper's a bit of an armful for Sophie



Jayne with her rescue Thomas Worcester

about in the trees above their heads, even though they had to be penned up in two different areas because of the danger of falling branches.

Through the rest of November and December, we squelched our way through to Christmas. We were luckier than many in Somerset not to have experienced flooding, but the Fivery has been like a mud pond.

Christmas brought, as usual, cards and donations from friends old and new. It never ceases to amaze us at the generosity of people who support Catwork - thank you all so much!

Our thanks on behalf of the cats extend to so many people for the ongoing financial and moral support we receive - our regular sponsors and everyone who has donated in any way. We receive many donations of food, cat treats, bedding, beds and baskets as well as money.

Thanks once again to Animal Affairs Charity shop in Bristol, run by Barry and Angela, who have supported Catwork for many years with regular cheques.



Liz and Zoe with the usual gang



Zoe hands out some treats



Zoe finds Sandy more friendly than ever



Stella with Thomas Cornwall, Big Boy and Jasper



Stan and Dot get the same cats again - there are others!

Thanks to Portishead Spiritualist Church for a generous donation. We took on the elderly cat of Margaret, the treasurer's, mother and Lucky spent her last years with us, so the group got to know of our work.

Bristol and District Cat Club sent us a very generous donation from their welfare fund just before Christmas, which was very welcome.

Thanks once again to Thomas Cornwall's supporters down in Saltash where vet Rob keeps a donation box for Thomas and friends, and sent through a generous cheque.

A surprise cheque last year came from the newly established Gwilliam Trust Fund, set up to help people working for needy animals in our area. This came about because we had helped an elderly deaf white cat left behind by the Gwilliams' tenants at the farm, and we were able to place the cat with good friend Claire of the "Catwork outpost". Claire lived near the farm, went to see the cat and took him on and he spent the remaining years of his life in cat heaven, spoilt rotten. Many grateful thanks to Alison Gwilliam for remembering the incident and putting us forward to the committee as potential recipients of some funding.



Debbie and Adele, and Jean behind, in the Felvry with Tommy



Jean cuddles George



Debbie shows she knows how to make friends of the cats!



Adele very patiently approaches nervous Harry



Trish and David get some attention

Another surprise cheque came from new acquaintances, the Comptons in Wiltshire, which was a surprise win on their Premium Bonds - how nice was that! They also make greetings cards from real pressed flowers to give to rescues to sell, and they made some special Christmas ones for Catwork. The cards involve much painstaking detailed work and we are touched by the kind thought of Margaret and Andrew for making them for us.

The Dennis sisters in Berkshire continued to send donations and gifts of bedding - so more grateful thanks to them for their ongoing support.

Thanks to friend Jayne from Worcester, who brought, on one of her visits, a welcome gift for the garden - another seat for visitors to the Fivery. We now have two seats for visitors to sit and cuddle the cats. Jayne at Christmastime bought a huge bag of goodies for the cats indoors and out. It was packed with toys, treats and calendars she'd put together of various Catwork cats, not forgetting a new cat doorstop. She certainly outrivalled Santa Claus with the goodie bag.

Bob from Taunton has kept us supplied with wood shavings for the outdoor litter trays, but his source has now dried up with the firm



Kirsty and Mary get a lapful of cats...



...and admire Mary's rescue, Mr Darcy



Maggie makes an offering to Cecil and friends



Maggie and Doug pay attention to Big Boy

closing. Alison, however, of the newly formed Trust Fund, has come to the rescue with the chippings she uses for her horses and has offered an ongoing supply.

Thanks, ongoing, to Moira who fosters Oscar for Catwork up in Leicester, and Sue in Minehead who looks after Brandy, now a really old cat.

Thanks to friend Pete who looked after Fluff for Catwork when his owner suddenly died. Sadly, Fluff had to be put to sleep in 2012 after a stroke, but thanks to Pete, Fluff enjoyed two years of luxury.

This year we must also thank all the people who sent donations upon receipt of our book, especially the Cat Action Trust who sent a very generous donation to help us print more books. This money will enable us to go on spreading the "good news" about FIV.

As ever, we remain indebted to our brilliant vets at Quantock Veterinary Hospital who go out of their way to help us. We are so lucky to have such a caring, professional veterinary practice right on our doorstep. Grateful thanks to all the staff.

At the end of 2012, Catwork sanctuary was home to 20 FIV cats, 4 FeLVs and 3 special needs. Our house cats numbered 9, plus 1 rabbit.



Sara, Lyn and Lorna bring their usual abundance of cat treats



Sara has a quiet time with Bruce, Cecil and erm... a black one!



Pete is keen to show off Fluff



Lesley tries again to cuddle reluctant Bear!



Jennifer and Martin visit Sandy and can't believe how friendly she is

NEW ARRIVALS IN 2012

SOOTY (elderly)

Sooty, a tiny, elderly, skinny black cat was the first to arrive at Catwork in winter 2012.

We are getting too old to take on young FIVs who can, and do, live into their teens, so Sooty fitted the bill through being much older and in need of help.

Our Worcester friends, while trying to help an FIV cat from the same household as Sooty, saw she was in



need of help. Indeed, her owner had asked Cats Protection for help earlier when his wife died and he lost his job, but no help was forthcoming. He struggled on as best he could, but was not coping. The FIV cat had left home and Sooty was needing a 'sort-out'. Jayne brought Sooty to us during a particularly cold snap, so we had to put up a pen in the house for her.

Sooty took to being with us straight away, much to the consternation of the other house cats whom she can't resist swiping as they pass by!

Sooty still has her food and a bed in the pen, otherwise she is free to go wherever she likes. She is quite a formidable little lady, but very affectionate. Every morning she spends some time in the office on Bob's lap.

Sooty has filled out and is looking great, with her fur now looking sleek and glossy.

THOMAS WORCESTER (FIV)

Thomas Worcester (to differentiate him from Thomas Cornwall and Thomas Redruth) originated from the same home as little Sooty, but he had gone missing.

Actually, Thomas was only a few streets away, being fed by a lady who became very concerned one day when the cat collapsed and appeared not to be able to walk. She contacted Cats Protection, and our friend Jayne, who was at that time doing "lost and found", hurriedly took Thomas to the vet.



It looked like Thomas was suffering from anaemia and would need some weeks to recuperate and have more blood tests. The fact that he was found to be FIV positive meant that Cats Protection "local management" were reluctant to give him the time he would need and then find him difficult to home - such cats are known as "pen blockers". The vet, knowing of our specialist sanctuary, wanted Thomas to come to us, and we agreed that he could, but Cats Protection wasn't having any of it - Thomas' life was in danger!

The fact that Thomas was microchipped proved to be his salvation, as our friend took the owner to see Thomas at the vet's, where he asked for his cat back! Such a business and so unnecessary; one would have thought that this Cats Protection group would have been more than happy to have a 'difficult' cat taken care of, but no!

However, since this cat was chipped, their hands were tied and his owner was happy for Thomas to come to Catwork where he would be looked after.

Thomas was duly brought down to Somerset where he has thrived. He had several regular blood tests until his anaemia improved and, one year later, he is a really big cat, very lion-like, loving the outdoor/indoor life he's always been used to.

Thomas and Sooty shared the same home for years, without Sooty contracting the virus - another example of the nonsense about FIV being easily transmitted!

DAVEY (FeLV)

A call from a vet nurse in Wiltshire alerted us to the plight of Davey, who had tested positive for leukaemia and, being at the vets, would not be allowed a confirmatory test in three months' time as there would be nowhere for him to go (some cats deal with the virus in that time, so a first FeLV test can never be conclusive). We said we would take Davey, keeping him apart from the other FeLVs until the second test could be done.



We drove to Wiltshire to pick him up - these "cat errand" days are often the only away days we have together!

In due course, Davey had his second blood test and, unfortunately, it did prove to be positive for leukaemia. Coming to us, however, does mean he will be able to have a life instead of being prematurely put to sleep.

Since then, Davey has shared a chalet and garden area with Charlie and Tommy, and is doing well and looking good.

BAGGY (elderly / special needs)

Baggy, an elderly blind cat, here in the village, needed a new home when his owner, who had inherited him and another cat with the house, lost her husband and had to move. She sold the house and found a cottage to rent in our village, but the landlord did not allow her to have cats. The younger cat was taken on by a relative who felt unable to cope with a blind cat. Poor Baggy suddenly lost everyone and everything he knew!



Numerous phone calls to the local Cats Protection went unanswered

and the lady was getting desperate, when someone at the doctor's surgery, where she worked, suggested giving Catwork a ring.

Baggy was just the sort of special needs / older cat we had in mind for the new "cat room" adjoining the house, but it wasn't ready to use - it will be quite a big job sorting it out. There was nothing for it but to move the nervous ginger brothers, Harry and Barley, up to the Fivery in a self-contained area, so freeing up their chalet and outside area near the house for Baggy.

Although blind, Baggy very quickly learnt about his new contained environment, exploring all the levels to climb and sit on, and coping very well.

He has turned out to be a charming old boy, very amenable and quite a character, much liked by the visitors. These blind cats certainly seem to make up with their other senses what they have lost in sight. Baggy is well aware of everything. We had always thought we would bring him into the house, but then another needy elderly cat arrived - Jemima - with whom he has struck up a friendship. With nine in the house already, we feel it would be pushing it to add two more, as now we couldn't split them up.

Baggy likes the fresh air anyway, so now he has a protected space where he can be both indoors and outdoors and has a lady friend. He's done so well.



JEMIMA (elderly)

This friendly, elderly, black cat was handed in to our vets in the summer, having been found wandering in a field. She was so skinny it seemed like she might not survive. At the time the poor cat weighed less than a bag of sugar.

Our wonderful vets persevered with her, giving what treatment she needed and feeding her up. She responded well and won the heart of the vet looking after her, and the nurses. They called her Jemima. When Barbara heard the story she offered to take her on. The staff were thrilled, being reluctant to hand her over to the RSPCA knowing that they put to sleep so many elderly animals. So, here was another

oldie destined for our famous 'cat room', but having to make do for the time being in a chalet near the house. Jemima had a few check-ups and put on weight until the vet who'd fallen for her exclaimed that she finally looked like a 'proper cat'. Jemima has indeed done well, she loves her food, and plenty of it, is very affectionate and makes a nice companion for blind Baggy.

LITTLE MAN (special needs)

Little Man is a much younger cat than we had intended taking on, but very much "special needs".

He came to our notice through our Worcester friends (does anyone spot a trend here?) one of whom kept her horse on the farm where Little Man and the rest of the colony lived - fed but unneutered, and where genetic deformities were beginning to occur.



The owner was persuaded to begin a neutering campaign, paid for by cat organisations. Our little cat was one of the ones neutered and a polyp (growth) removed from his ear before he was returned to the farm. However, he developed a severe head tilt and our friend took him back to the vet. The owner called a halt to the neutering programme as she didn't really believe in it! As she was not prepared to pay for any treatment for this little cat who the vet thought would need another operation, all he could be given was antibiotics.

Barbara felt she had to offer to pay for the operation if he needed one. At this time, friend Jayne described the way he looked as if his head was on "back to front", the head tilt was so severe.

Arrangements were made in the summer to bring him down to Somerset. Barbara met Jayne at the Vet hospital where Little Man was examined and given a very guarded prognosis - only time would tell. In the meantime Barbara brought the little chap back to Catwork where we had to apply special ear-drops frequently for some time - this seemed to help the tilt.

Initially, Little Man was in the third area of the complex housing Baggy and Jemima, but separated.

Despite his strange appearance, Little Man was extremely active and able to eat; it was clear that he was a bit of a character.

Being so young and needing more company and attention than we could give him outside, we decided to bring him into the house to join the upstairs gang, Polly and Oliver, much to their initial bemusement. All three learnt to cope.

It was when we heard a rattling sound from his breathing that the vet said was a signal all was not well and he should be investigated. What they found was another large polyp, which the vet was able to remove cleanly with the stalk, so we hope no more polyps will grow.

Little Man has gone from strength to strength. From a scruffy little brown curiosity, he has grown into a shiny black youngster full of mischief, and with a much straighter head. He is very affectionate and quite the naughtiest little cat we've ever encountered!

Little Man delights in stealing objects - some of which would seem to be too heavy to carry off - and we expect to find a secret hoard where they are probably stashed away!

We think he is a little deaf as he's the only one who takes no notice of noisy things like the vacuum cleaner - either that or he has no fear of anything - possibly both!

Little Man loves to play with toys and is a great TV fan, trying to catch the birds in wildlife programmes.

It is very rewarding to see the transformation that has occurred and be able to give Little Man a new chance in life.



So what am I supposed to do with this?



Oh, I see, I have to try to get the ball out...



I think they're having me on...



Sod it, I'll just use it as a bed - any chance of a cushion?

THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2011

LUCY (FIV)

We were not far into the new year when we experienced our first loss - little FIV Lucy. This had not been unexpected as she had face cancer when we took her on as a stray from our vets. She did much better than anyone expected and had some quality time with us. Lucy's little face was quite disfigured with the cancer, but it didn't seem to affect her sweet nature.



The cancer advanced in early 2012 and, when a tumour on her side appeared and started leaking, we knew it was time to let her go.

It was always a mystery why no one seemed to be looking for such a dear little cat, but we gave her what time she had left.



BELLA (FeLV)

Our second casualty of January 2012 was not so expected, though with FeLV cats one never knows when the virus is going to kick in.

Mid January Bella went off her food and was found to have a temperature. Not having responded to the treatment given, she was taken back to the hospital next day for tests. Her kidneys and liver seemed compromised and an analysis of blood done at the lab revealed that the leukaemia virus was indeed affecting her major organs and she was not going to be treatable.

We went into the hospital next day where our lovely girl was put to sleep and we buried her next to her sister Bonny.

These were two of the most beautiful, sweet natured cats one could wish for. It is absolutely tragic that this cruel virus cut their lives so short. At least they had some quality time after they were rescued and diagnosed by our friends in the Forest of Dean CP. Not many rescue groups would have allowed them any life at all after diagnosis but would have put them to sleep straight away.



DONNY (FIV)

Donny, the cat who had come to us as a cruelty case in 2003 (he had been left in a bathroom and almost starved to death) soldiered on until the autumn of 2012.

Despite being FIV, he had overcome so many health issues during his long life, including bad flu, and a high risk removal of the whole ear and ear canal on one side due to cancer.

Donny thrived here at Catwork, got on well with the other cats and

loved his food. The last part of his life had him suffering from pancreatic insufficiency, which causes bad diarrhoea because of the malabsorption of the food. Donny had to have regular B12 injections to get the most out of it. He coped well for quite some time.

As autumn drew on Donny became more and more frail, until one day it became evident that he was fading away and not likely to make it through the night. In true Donny style, he had eaten breakfast as usual, jumping up to his place with the aid of a carefully positioned stool.

Barbara took him to the hospital in Bridgwater where it was agreed that his time had come, and he was quietly put to sleep, unaware of what was going on.

What an old trooper! Donny certainly showed us during his time here just how much an FIV cat can deal with.



HUTCH (Special needs)

Hutch was the only non-FIV cat living in the Fivery. When we took him on he was very scared and wary of people and needed to be in a safe environment.

Although not FIV, he did suffer badly at one stage from mouth problems - very bad stomatitis.

After trying many things, we hit upon regular doses of ovarid, which seemed to do the trick. Once we had worked out the best dosage for Hutch to keep his mouth comfortable, we never looked back.

Hutch was a sweet-natured cat, and, although wary of humans, he liked nothing better than to be in the middle of a heap of cats.

He needed a blood test for something one day and we asked out of interest to check his FIV status. No surprise to us, but, despite mixing for years with an ever changing gang of FIV cats, he remained FIV negative.

Hutch was beginning to look a bit old, and Barbara thought she would get him checked out, though he didn't appear to be suffering from anything specific. This never happened, however, as, very unexpectedly, he moved himself to the top chalet one evening and, next morning, Barbara found him dead in his bed; he must have died peacefully in his sleep. Nice way to go, but a shock when it is not expected.

He is much missed by us and, probably, his best cat friends.



BATMAN (FIV)

Batman, so called because he was a rescue from Battersea (Dogs and Cats Home) enjoyed very good health during his time with us, having few problems, so it was a shame when the dreaded cancer was the cause of his demise. Cancer is no respecter of people or animals when it strikes.

What started out as bad diarrhoea and weight loss was treated in the usual way, but it didn't clear up and Batty was losing weight. He picked

up for a bit on steroids, but when he was given an ultrasound scan, a suspicious thickening of a part of the intestines was seen. An operation in that part of the stomach is high risk in itself, so we just had to monitor Batman, give him palliative treatment and see how things developed. He did quite well for a while and was his usual bright, sometimes feisty, little self.

One weekend in November a high temperature took him to hospital. Although the vet brought the temperature down, Batty did not want to eat; blood appeared in the faeces, and we were advised that the end was in sight, so to prevent him suffering, Batty was put to sleep at the hospital. Sadly, it was impossible for us to be present - one or both of us usually is there at the end - but we couldn't get there and the poor little chap was somewhat 'out of it' by then. The vet brought him back for burial in the Fivery.

Batman had been quite a little character and we had to fight for his release from Battersea where he was on 'death row' because of being FIV. It was only when his rescuer threatened to do a 'sit-in' with her friends outside the gates if they refused to let him come to Catwork, that he was released to us. Thankfully, things have changed, at least in that organisation, and FIVs now have a chance of life there. In fact Battersea was particularly interested in our FIV book and even sent a donation!

Batman had, hopefully, many happy years of life that he might otherwise not have had, and died of natural causes rather than by the dictates of some arbitrary regulation. If only all the organisations would come out of the dark ages on the subject of FIV.



FLUFF (Elderly)

This elderly little ginger cat was given a home by Pete who fostered him for Catwork after Fluff's owner died suddenly two years ago around Christmas time. Fluff had a wonderful life with Pete in Minehead and learnt to cope with three other rescue cats who were somewhat in awe of the old gent.

Pete used to bring Fluff to our vets for treatment, which accelerated in the last year of his life as Fluff developed high blood pressure and went blind. He still managed extremely well as, by now, he had learnt his way around his rescue home, having been there a year already.

One day in November, Barbara received a call from Pete saying Fluff had gone off his legs and couldn't stand. An appointment was made at the hospital in Bridgwater that afternoon and Pete picked Barbara up en route. As we suspected, Fluff was thought to have suffered a stroke and there wasn't anything that could be done for him. There were tears all round when the plucky little guy had to be put to sleep. Fluff, however, had a brilliant two years after his owner died, being accepted into the household and even looked up to! How different it might have been for this elderly chap. It was lucky that the lady feeding Fluff in the owner's absence was a relative of one of our sponsors, so the link was made to Catwork. Thanks to Pete, Fluff was given a second chance.

UPDATE ON OTHER CATWORK CATS

THE FIVs



CECIL

Cecil, this year's cover cat, is our longest stay and probably our oldest FIV cat; he has been with us eleven years, making him about thirteen or fourteen now.

Like any old cat, Cecil is now having some health problems, but is coping well.

He is a dear little cat, always eager to please, and a great favourite with visitors.



BRUCE

Bruce is another old boy, certainly into his teens, who has been here ten years, coming from a Bridgwater vet where he was taken as a stray.

At the beginning of the year he needed a tooth root removed; otherwise he had a good year.

Recently, he had a check-up as Barbara thought he was, unusually for him, eating more (he's always been a small, fussy eater) but nothing presented itself.

Bruce is a quiet cat, but always there in the gang.

BT

Named after the phone call to a vet in Berkshire that saved his life on New Year's Eve in 2007, BT had a good year in 2012.

He gets on well with the other cats but is not as evident as some when visitors are around.



BIG BOY

After a troublesome 2011, with eye and dental problems, Big Boy had a much better year in 2012 until, at the very end, he seemed off colour; blood tests, however, showed there was nothing seriously wrong.

Big Boy is a good-natured friendly cat and is another 'big' hit with the visitors.



JASPER

Jasper had a very good year healthwise. The problem he once had with crystals in the urine is now a thing of the past.

He has an enormous appetite and, when visitors come, likes nothing better than to drape himself around their necks like a living scarf.





WOODY

Woody, our Gloucester rescue, had a really good year with no health problems. He could eat for England, like so many ex-strays.

Woody's Gloucester sponsors like to pay a visit each year, always armed with lots of cat food - they know that the way to a cat's heart is through his stomach.



GUY

Up until last year, Guy enjoyed extremely good health, never needing to see the vet since his arrival in 2004

In 2012, however, we felt Guy was looking thin (difficult to tell with a cat who is lean by nature). Tests were run as we and the vet suspected Guy might be hyperthyroid. Extensive tests showed this not to be the case, so the weight loss remains a mystery.

Guy is weighed regularly and given an injection which helps process the food better. Each month when he is weighed, sometimes his weight is stable, other times gone down a little. Why this should be the case we still do not know. In himself Guy seems absolutely fine, active, bright and with a good appetite.

THOMAS CORNWALL

Thomas had a really good year in 2012. He still has his friends in Cornwall. Lucinda, who rescued him, sends him an annual donation and vet Rob has a collection box for Thomas and friends. Thomas is a lovely friendly cat who is doing well and looking good.



BERTIE

Bertie too had an excellent year in 2012 and had no reason to see the vet.

Bertie, found just next door to our cottage, is a quiet, sweet natured cat who doesn't put himself forward much, but likes a fuss when he is paid any attention. Bertie too is looking good.



THOMAS (Redruth)

Ever since we took him on in 2009, Thomas has had no health issues.

Thomas and Ralph came as a pair from Redruth in Cornwall, where his owner was not coping with them as indoor cats. They have enormous appetites and were raiding cupboards and eating anything they could find! The owner's sister was a vet nurse who met a vet nurse from Thomas Cornwall's practice. so the link was made with us.

The cats were going to be put to sleep, but instead came here where they love the freedom of the garden and as much food as they can get!





RALPH

As mentioned above, Ralph came with Thomas from Redruth and has done very well here. His only health problem is a bit of stomatitis (sore mouth) but we are able to keep him comfortable and eating with a small dose of ovarid a couple of times a week. This acts as a painkiller and seems to do the trick.

Otherwise, Ralph is fit, fat and healthy.



BEAR

Bear really prefers his own company but manages to cope with the others. He hates being picked up, even by his rescuer, Lesley, when she comes to see him.

Bear just walked into Lesley's house one day and went to sleep on the bed! She took him to the vets where she works as a receptionist not knowing that, if unclaimed after seven days, he would be put to sleep, as he was discovered to be FIV positive.

Lesley found us and now tries to educate others about FIV, directing worried owners to our website. Let's hope she has as much luck with the vets who clearly have the wrong idea about FIV, like so many.

Bear proves the point that FIV cats can be extremely healthy - since coming to us in 2010 he has not needed to see the vet.



GEORGE

George, our blind FIV, has been with us two years and not had any health problems.

The vets in Berkshire, used by our CLAWS friends, wanted to help him despite the fact that he was elderly, black, blind and FIV positive (such a good attitude - so different from many other vets).

George has his own special contained area in the Fivery, as,

being blind, he needs more protection from the rest, but he is very "with it" and quick to learn. When we made a linking tunnel from George's area through to Harry and Barley's bigger area so he could have more room and some company, George quickly learnt how to use the tunnel and is always keen to see if the boys have left him any titbits after meals! At night the tunnel is closed so that George can have his own bed in his own chalet.

George is a sweetie and one of Barbara's favourites; we're so glad we were able to help him, he deserves it.



TOBY

Coming from a "rescue" in Southampton where it was considered the right thing to do to put down FIV cats, Toby was lucky to have escaped with his life. How tragic that cats like him, young, fit and healthy, are still being put to sleep. His name came about from the Shakespeare quote "To be, or not to be".

Toby has now settled well into life in the Fivery, having grown up and filled out. His mouth can be a bit of a problem and he ended up having a dental on Christmas Eve, which enabled him to eat Christmas dinner without problems!

HARRY & BARLEY

The two brothers are inseparable and now live in their specially constructed area within the Fivery. We moved them in the spring when we needed their chalet near the house for special needs blind Baggy. Catching them up was traumatic, both for us and them, as they are terrified of being put in a basket, and are very fit and strong!



Once in their special area, they took to it like the proverbial ducks to water and seem to enjoy seeing all the other cats around them.

Harry - a very handsome ginger, is the more nervous of the two, but nowhere near as bad as when they first came in 2010. Harry has had a vet-free year.

Barley - did need to see the vet; in fact he had to go to the hospital for tests when he developed a bad leg, being unable to put his paw to the ground, and the third eyelid was coming across. Nothing initially could be found wrong with the paw; it seemed to improve, then went back to how it was at first. At the hospital, Barley had x-rays which revealed nothing, and the thinking was that he must have Horner's Syndrome, a neurological problem which usually resolves in time - all very strange.

Barley's problems did resolve, and quite quickly. We were told that he behaved himself remarkably well at the hospital - no trouble at all. So much for our warnings about how terribly frightened he was!



SAM

Sam has been with us for nearly two years, coming all the way from Stoke-on-Trent, and what a transformation from the terrified little cat who was in a really bad state when found, to the plump, confident cat of today.

Sam's one ongoing problem is his mouth which gets sore, so he has daily medication which keeps his mouth comfortable and he can eat well.

Sam has been well worth all the effort invested in him by Shell, his rescuer, and thank goodness that neither she nor the vet she took him to when she finally caught him, gave up on him.



MR MOG

Coming from a rescue that does not deal in FIV cats (The Moggery), Mr Mog has, despite being nervous at first, grown very confident and is now an established member of the gang.

He has a really big appetite and is quite vocal.

Healthwise, Mr Mog had a very good year, not needing to see the vet.



TREVOR

This friendly little cat came from a FIV-friendly vet in Southampton. He is not too happy around other cats but manages to cope, and doesn't miss out on anything.

Trevor too had a good year with no health issues.

The FeLVs



DANNY

We've had Danny, who originated in Birmingham, since 2010 when he was just a youngster. He has been well so far and grown into a solid cat.

Danny is very affectionate towards people but, unfortunately, not good with other cats. This means he has to occupy a chalet on his own, and, despite several attempts to integrate him with the other three FeLVs, Danny just wants to beat them up!



CHARLIE

Charlie has been with us nearly two years, coming from Worcester, where we seem to have made a lot of friends through Charlie and a few others, needing help.

All the people involved with Charlie's rescue come to visit regularly, always bringing goodies.

Charlie had a good year in 2012 with no health issues; he has in fact become rather plump. He loves to play fight with little Tommy, the youngest FeLV.

TOMMY

Tommy is the youngest of our four FeLVs, being not much more than a kitten when we took him on, again from Worcester, in the autumn of 2011. We have watched him grow into adulthood and he has made a very handsome cat with a lovely nature. Tommy gets on well with Charlie and Davey with whom he lives. Happily, Tommy had no health problems last year.



Special Needs

SANDY

Sandy no longer fits the special needs category in a way, as she has grown, from an extremely terrified cat, into a friendly, confident one, who even comes to see our visitors.

Sandy has always had her own little chalet in the garden, and has been free to come and go as she pleases, but lately she has taken to spending most of her time in the new utility area, where we have put a heated bed and where she has her meals.



Sandy has kidney problems for which she is on daily medication and has regular check-ups at the hospital. She is quite a character and it's so good to have enabled her to be confident enough to show everyone the "real" Sandy.

CATWORK FOSTER CATS



OSCAR

Moira in Leicester, who took on Oscar a few years back when we were unable to accommodate him, tells us he is fit and well. From a nervous beginning he has settled in with the rest of the feline family and has no health issues at the moment.



BRANDY

Brandy is still soldiering on, fostered by Sue in Minehead who found him when he went missing after his owner died.

Brandy goes back to the very early days of Catwork (mid-nineties) so he must be a really old cat now. We're told he can be quite cantankerous!

Helping cats further afield

As well as looking after the cats who live with us, we are always busy, via email or phone, trying to help people with their FIV cat problems. We are careful never to give veterinary advice, but are often able to make suggestions about the problem which is concerning the owners.

The FIV book seems to have helped many people understand the virus better and come to fear it less. Written in an accessible way illustrating the points made with "real" cats, gives the book a validity appreciated by many readers. We are so glad we finally managed to write it.



Sandy's story

We get involved sometimes with cats outside the sanctuary needing help. One such was Sandy, who had adopted a housebound friend in the next village to us. Back in the autumn Sandy went missing,

reappearing through the cat flap three weeks later, very thin, oil over his head and having great difficulty eating although absolutely ravenous.

Barbara was asked if she could pick up Sandy and get him to the vet, which of course she did. Sandy's inability to eat became apparent when the vet discovered the poor cat's tongue was rotting away! The poor little chap was put on a drip to rehydrate him, and tests run to see if his kidneys could cope with an anaesthetic to try and sort out the tongue. (Amazingly, animals can learn to eat with just a stub of a tongue!) The blood results were fine and Sandy was operated on next day. As he was being tubed, most of his tongue just fell away!

Despite all he had been through (probably shut in somewhere for three weeks with nothing to eat and getting his tongue trapped somehow) Sandy made a remarkable recovery. We had him here for two weeks convalescence at Catwork, making sure he got all his medications and check-ups.

This bright little cat learnt to eat with virtually no tongue, but, as you can imagine, it was a very messy business. With no tongue he was unable to groom himself, so we did the best we could and, on returning him home, he had the undivided care and attention of his owner and lots of fuss from the carers who came in several times a day.

After a few days, Barbara fetched Sandy in for the vet check-up, and Sandy was "signed off". All seemed to be going well, then, a couple of weeks later, a very upset Phyllis, Sandy's owner, phoned late one night with the terribly sad news that Sandy had died there on the bed, in his usual place. We can only assume he had a heart attack. What an awful shame after the poor little cat had overcome so much; poor Sandy deserved better luck!

Flynn's story

Towards the end of the year, the practice manager of vets in Cheshire phoned to see if we could help an FIV cat they had, having been given our number but not realising how far away we were.



A lady had been feeding the nervous black and white stray, and, thinking she was doing the right thing, she approached the local Cats Protection group for help with getting it neutered and rehoming it. How wrong could she be!

The veterinary practice, as is the case with many Cats Protection groups, was told to blood test the cat and put it down if it was positive for FIV!

The vets, by mistake, neutered the cat first, then blood tested it, only to find it was FIV positive. Cats Protection washed their hands of the whole affair, refused to pay anything and left the vets 'holding the baby'. At this point Catwork was approached for help.

As luck would have it, we have sponsors, Roger and Viv, in Cheshire with an FIV cat of their own and, amazingly, just 20 minutes drive from the vets in question. Roger immediately agreed to go and get the cat off 'death row' next day and get him microchipped to safeguard him in future. The practice manager was amazed at this lucky outcome. The lady who had been feeding the cat was outraged at CP's attitude and herself paid for the neutering. The cat, who had had a very lucky escape from the Cats Protection group's policy, was taken home by Roger, to a surprised but delighted Viv.

This lovely affectionate cat is now called Flynn and the intention is for Roger and Viv to keep him and integrate him with their feline family.

THE HOUSE CATS



MILLIE

Millie, always Barbara's favourite, did well in 2012 despite her advancing years (17+) and coping with being hyperthyroid and having kidney issues. She is, of course, on daily medication and has frequent check-ups at the hospital where her blood pressure is monitored and kidney function checked.

Every evening, Millie is to be found on Barbara's lap where she gets many cuddles.



BILLY

Billy, since the removal from his throat in 2011 of a polyp the size of a gobstopper, has gone from strength to strength, looking better in his old age than he once did as a youngster.

Coming to us in the year 2000 as a terrified stray, he must now be about 15. Once a lover of the outdoors, hanging around with his mate Ginger Tom, these days he rarely goes out.

Billy is a very sweet-natured cat and a great friend to all the other cats.

JACK

Diagnosed with a serious congenital heart condition in 2011, Jack has done extremely well. He is, of course, on daily medication, topped up with the famous herbal heart remedy, Crataegus.



Jack's special friend is Billy, and, on nice days, the pair of them sit on the log store outside the kitchen window, like a couple of old men on a park bench.

Jack was brought to us as a stray kitten found wandering in the village and never claimed. He grew into a gentle giant with an appetite to match.

MARMADUKE

Brought to the door as a small kitten, having been found on the bypass, unable to walk, Marmaduke was a really lucky little cat - firstly to be found before getting run over, and secondly that his broken leg was saved by our skilful vet.



Since that shaky start to his life, Marmaduke has been healthy, happy and fun-loving. He is the only ginger in the house out of nine - the other eight are all black!

Marmaduke loves attention and is know as the "meet and greet" cat.



POLLY

Polly, yet another stray from the village, needed a major dental last spring. She seemed to be eating normally so we had not realised how bad her mouth had become. After the removal of the offending teeth, Polly had to learn to eat with considerably fewer.

Polly is an indoor cat who likes to spend her days on our bed and beside a real fire in the winter evenings - all right for some!

She does, however, have to cope with two, sometimes naughty, youngsters, Oliver and Little Man who joined the household last summer.

Polly is a pretty little cat with her extra toe on each foot giving her extra charm.



OLIVER

Oliver was the kitten who came for Christmas in 2007 when the postman found him in a country lane. He was never claimed so, of course, he stayed.

Oliver had us really worried last spring as he had a blocked bladder - very painful and serious for a male cat. Poor little chap was in a lot of pain and was rushed back to the hospital where he remained for a week while he was treated. Barbara was actually visiting friend Maureen while Oliver was in hospital and phoned in every day for a progress report. Apart from pulling the catheter out a couple of times, Oliver was successfully unblocked. All the nurses fell in love with him as he was so good - quite an ordeal for the little chap.

Oliver came home with lots of medication and, thankfully, has not had a recurrence of this miserable problem. To this day we give him a Cystaid capsule every other day which guards against urinary problems.

Oliver now has a playmate in Little Man (see New Arrivals) though when the latter gets a bit over-excited, Oliver hisses at him.

Oliver's favourite toy is "da-bird" and he 'asks' to play with it every evening.

COCO

Coco has now been with us just over a year and is settled into the housecat routine. Barbara brought him back from her trip to London when launching the FIV book, taking him from a terminally ill lady who was worried about Coco's future, since he is nervous and black (black cats often have a difficult time finding homes).



Because of his nervousness we did not let him out until spring as the builders were here during the winter 2011/12 working on the extension.

Come spring Coco began, bit by bit, to explore the garden at the back of the house, but with all the inclement weather there's been, he's happy to remain indoors much of the time - cats aren't daft!

Although still quite young (30 months), Coco is a big cat and, unsurprisingly, has an enormous appetite. Coco looks a bit oriental and is quite a striking cat.

MR DARCY

Darcy rabbit had a good year. He is as friendly as ever, taking an interest in everything around him. His 'moptop' hair causes much comment and he's always popular with visitors whom he rushes over to greet.



2012 Rant - Some progress but still a long way to go

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

When we wrote our book on FIV, we naively thought things were improving for positive cats in rescue, and that the book would be an "add-on". We have, however, found through the many people who contacted us that there is still much ignorance about FIV amongst rescues and, shockingly, vets. So the chance of life for a 'rescue' FIV cat is still very much a matter of luck as to who rescues it (see Flynn's story p31).

The bigger organisations seem to be the worst offenders in destroying FIV cats.

Despite some enlightened RSPCA individuals requesting the book, the organisation remains serial killers of FIV cats.

Surprisingly, Blue Cross show little understanding of FIV and are even prepared to put kittens to sleep. We know the attitude from the past as our own Nick was on 'death row' - a tiny, terrified youngster - just because he was an FIV stray. We heard about him and rescued him in the 'nick' of time; and he grew into a beautiful, loving, cat who had many years with us. Seemingly, things have not changed with the Blue Cross, as friends in Worcester also rescued a healthy FIV kitten which the Blue cross had instructed the vet to put to sleep. Luckily for him, our Worcester friends were able to prevent this and found the little chap a home.

A surprise to many will be the different attitudes shown by Cats Protection groups across the country.

Although head office policy is not to put to sleep, it requires the fosterers to home an FIV as an indoor, only cat. If this requirement cannot be met then CP says the cat should be destroyed.

Seeing these cats as 'pen blockers', as it takes longer to meet the requirements of head office, many groups, we have discovered, tell their vet firstly to blood test an unneutered stray cat and put to sleep if positive for FIV; only if negative are the vets instructed to neuter and pass to the group for rehoming (see Flynn's lucky escape from this policy p31). Is this what 'protecting' an individual cat means? We don't think so!

We have been shocked to discover just how many Cats Protection groups follow this policy, and a very expensive one it is too - tests cost around £60, and "euthanasia" another £30, so not much change from £100 to end up with a dead cat! This is probably not what people imagine when they donate money. What an awful waste of resources which could be used in helping and 'protecting' cats, not selecting which ones are to live and which to die.

Thankfully, not all Cats Protection groups adopt this policy, and we know of many good ones who do exactly what it says on the tin - protect every cat which comes their way. Such a group is the Forest of Dean, with whom we have had a long association. This group tries to place all their rescues, however long it takes. If only every group was like that one!

It's still going to take a long time for the real facts about FIV to be taken on by all those ignorant and blinkered vets and rescues.

Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)

With so many FIVs still being 'rescued' only to be killed, you can imagine how few leukaemia positive cats escape the system.

Fortunately, leukaemia has been on the decline, but, in the current climate with so many people unable to afford neutering, let alone vaccinations, things may well change, as there are, sadly, so many strays out there.

Leukaemia infected cats cannot be expected to have a long life (unlike FIVs) but this is not an excuse to destroy a cat who has it. They still can live for a good few years, some longer than others, and should be allowed to do so.

To Conclude

Our work for FIVs continues through the book which, we're pleased to say, has been well received and appreciated. However, the huge task remains of trying to change hearts and minds of those, like some vets and others with authority, who have based their views about FIV on poor evidence. Sadly, such people have great influence.

On the plus side, more and more people are wanting to find things out for themselves and turning to the Internet, where our information, based on real experience of many cats over a long period, is readily to be found.

Our work towards helping older and special needs cats has already begun (see this year's New Arrivals section). The physical work of creating suitable accommodation in the new extension is still to be done (Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was the Fivery). Everything at Catwork has always evolved, through responding to the need at the time.

So, we go into 2013 trying to help a few old / special needs cats and with a fierce determination to continue to stand up for FIVs and challenge those who still believe it to be a "terrible disease" (as one so-called "expert" recently described it to us!) One need only read our experience down the years to realise that this view is not borne out by the facts.

Captions for photos on right

- 1 *Charlie and Tommy are happy to share a bed, or a cushion*
- 2 *7 in a bed, who said cats are solitary creatures?*
- 3 *Polly, Oliver and Little Man enjoy a game with DaBird*
- 4 *Charlie and Tommy like a rough and tumble*
- 5 *Little Man and Marmaduke share the 'Granny chair'*
- 6 *A bunch of them open their Christmas parcel in the Fivery*
- 7 *Billy and Jack are often together - on the garden chair...*
- 8 *...or on the log store*
- 9 *Millie, Little Man, Marmaduke and Coco settle down for the evening with Barbara*

Together time for cats

they like to...

sleep together...

play together...

just be together

