



THE CATWORK YEAR

2014



## The Catwork Year 2014

### Thomas Cornwall

Our front cover cat this year

Thomas Cornwall appears in many photos in the yearbook as one of the crowd, so we thought it was about time he had pride of place on his own, on the front cover.

Thomas turned up at a farm near Liskeard, owned by cat-loving people who's vet phoned Catwork to see if we would take him as he had tested positive for FIV, to which we agreed, obviously!

Thomas managed to get out of his pen on the first evening of his arrival at Catwork, which was somewhat embarrassing as both his rescuers and their vet had gone to so much trouble to find him somewhere to go.

We needn't have worried, however, as Thomas, smart cat that he is, turned up for breakfast!

Thomas, so far, has been extremely fit and well. He loves the visitors who come and is a very 'easy' cat to look after.

2015, another New Year, and time to look back and report on the events of 2014 at Catwork.

It was, in fact, a rather unusual and exciting year. There were some memorable occasions; several new supporters joined our band of loyal friends.

The 'oldies' room at the end of the new extension was completed, together with a mini garden linking it to the more extensive enclosed garden areas, and the work of spreading the 'good news' about FIV progressed well.

The year got off to a brilliant start when our little elderly FIV rescue, Plucky, was voted Pet of the Year 2013 at the Pet Oscars evening at our veterinary hospital.

This little cat, who had come to us absolutely terrified with a neck wound that needed 85 stitches to close, and was also found to be diabetic, was a very popular winner (even one of the other contestants made a donation to Catwork!)

Barbara was, to say the least, "over the moon" and went about for days grinning like the proverbial Cheshire cat.

Spring brought some memorable events for Barbara, the first of which was spending Mothering Sunday weekend in Windsor with son Ted and Anna.

Our friends from CLAWS (Cat Lovers Animal Welfare Society) had arranged a picnic lunch on the Saturday, and it was great to meet many of the gang who run this remarkable group doing such good work, often with difficult cats.

Barbara saw the sights of Windsor and had a boat trip up the Thames. The surprise bonus of the Windsor break was seeing the queen, together with the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince William, who happened to be in Windsor to unveil a bronze statue of the Windsor Greys. All in all a very memorable weekend.

In May, Barbara reached one of those 'big birthdays' and many of our cat friends came to help celebrate.

Friends from Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester, and even Sussex, came to Catwork on the sunny Saturday.

The various groups didn't know people from the other groups, so there was much chatter about how they had got to know us.

Barbara's daughter had a wonderful cake made consisting of a large central cake surrounded by cupcakes made to look like cat faces, all different colours with different expressions. This went down well, washed down with champagne drunk from "Hello Kitty" cups.

A week later, Barbara was in London enjoying the present arranged



Vet Colin (2nd from left) helped elevate Barbara to 'cloud nine' at the 'POTY' presentation evening, with 3 judges and vet nurse Sian



Plucky still can't quite believe it!



No room for all those candles!



The 'gangs' (Bristol, Worcester and Gloucester) meet at last ... the cats seem to have found better things to do!

by daughter Dora and son Ted, which was a trip to "Warhorse" - it was amazing! Maybe it wasn't so bad being 70 after all!

Visitors came throughout the year, including some new friends - Kath from Lincolnshire, Aysa from London, Helen, more local, and Seppo all the way from Helsinki! We also met, at long last, Rosemary and Mike from Northampton who have supported Catwork for years but had never visited.

One unexpected visitor was the professor of virology at Nottingham University who brought a student wanting to do a project on FIV for her dissertation. She went back with all the health records of all the cats we've cared for - quite a resource for her study.

In the autumn, Barbara enjoyed a visit to the "Catwork Outpost", so called because friend Claire over the years has taken on several Catwork cats. She still has Joey, a cat who had a false positive test for FeLV, enjoying life to the full in the fields of rural Somerset. Barbara was pleased also to see a cat, now an old lady, she had rescued in Nether Stowey as a kitten wandering around the village. Lucky cat to have



Kath gets to know the FIV gang, Toby, Cecil, Jasper and Thomas Cornwall



Aysa with Jasper



Helen gives Cecil special attention



Bertie tells Seppo something, while Jasper, Thomas Worcester and Thomas Cornwall wait



Rosemary and Mike are pleased to finally meet the FIV gang

such a good home. It was great watching the latest addition to Claire's feline family - a little oriental and a mischievous black kitten who had been handed in to her vet's.

December brought a steady stream of cards, a visit from "Santa Jayne" and Liz, bearing gifts for us and the cats. It never fails to amaze us how many people remember the cats at Christmastime.

### Thank yous

As ever, all our sponsors and supporters have enabled us to keep going with the work.

Through the cats we meet some lovely people, and it is thanks to their generosity that we are able to do what we do.

As well as the support of our regular sponsors, we have received money, food and bedding from so many others - so thank you to everybody!

It's great to be able to report that, after losing several sponsors and supporters recently for various reasons, in 2014 we gained several



Annie has a final cuddle with her sponsored cat, Cecil



Judy gives attention to her sponsored cat, Bertie



Trish and David catch up with all the cats



Dorinda gives Charlie a hug



Lesley knows how to attract the gang



Stella with the Thomases, Cornwall and Worcester, and Bertie

new ones enabling us to keep paying the bills! Welcome to Phil, Kath, Aysa, Seppo, Helen and Patrice.

Thanks once again to Barry and Angela who run Animal Affairs Charity shop in Bristol, which supports small rescues, and we have been grateful recipients of regular donations for many years.

Thanks once again to Portishead Spiritualist Church for another donation - we gave sanctuary to the treasurer's mum's elderly cat a few years back, and they have been helping Catwork ever since.

Thanks once again to the Somerset Cat Club for generously sending a donation to Catwork.

The Dennis sisters in Berkshire continued to give donations and blankets, so thanks, as ever, to them. It was lovely to meet them at last when Barbara went to Windsor in the spring.

Just before Christmas we received a large donation from a local charity - The Gwilliam Trust Fund. It was a welcome boost to the funds in December - a particularly expensive month, with several cats needing ultrasound, x-rays and a lab test.



Stan and Dot with Jasper (of course) and Toby



Barbara and Seppo with Thomas Worcester and Jasper



Kath with Bertie and Chris



Roger has a serious chat with Elvis



Jayne and Dorinda - trying to control Jasper's tail?



Guy, Thomas Worcester and Ralph wait patiently to open their presents

Alison Gwilliam also keeps us supplied with free woodchip bales which we use in the litter trays in the garden, and for which we are very grateful.



A big thank you to Catwork sponsor Jean, who gave a home to the tabby youngster found as a stray in our village. He is doing well in Gloucester, where he shares a home with two dogs.

*Lucky George in a great home.*

As ever, the team of vets, nurses and support staff at Quantock Veterinary Hospital have been great. We think they do such a good job looking after the cats with great skill and compassion, while providing much support for ourselves.

At the beginning of 2015, Catwork was home to: 17 FIVs, 2 FeLVs, 2 'Oldies', 8 housecats and 1 rabbit.



*Sandy receives special attention from Seppo... and Kath*

## NEW ARRIVALS IN 2014

### Chris

Chris was a local stray, named after the lady whose house he was going to in search of food.

One day he appeared to have an injured leg, so it was important to catch him and sort him out.

Chris was caught using a trap borrowed from the local Cats Protection, but Barbara advised that the cat be taken to our vet as he was not



neutered and known to be a fighter, so it was quite likely to be FIV positive and ran the risk of being put to sleep elsewhere.

Chris was indeed found to be FIV positive and in need of cage rest till his leg healed. We had no choice but to take him on, putting him initially in our hospital bay so he could rest his leg.

When Chris was ready to join the gang, he was, at first, a bit feisty, always having had to fight for food. Once he realised he would get fed, he settled down nicely, but not before he found a weak spot in the pen, high up above his chalet roof, and managed to get out over night.

However, before Barbara had finished the breakfast round, she noticed the cats showing interest in something outside the Fivery enclosure, which turned out to be Chris, back in time for breakfast! Not daft, are they?



## Elvis

We were asked if we could help Elvis by a rescue group in Wales who were in the throes of moving their rescue, and were unable to help the cat who was endearing himself to the staff of their vets, but needed to move on.

We agreed to help, but intended it would be on a foster basis as we discovered that Cats Protection Bristol were homing FIV cats as indoor only cats (unlike many groups who are still these days putting them down) but they had no accommodation for him at that time.

Trying not to take on any more young cats, we thought this arrangement would work, until we met Elvis. Never was there a cat less suited to life as an indoor cat!

Within the space of an hour of his "delivery" by two supporters of the Welsh rescue, he had found a way out of his pen, which we'd checked thoroughly! Luckily, Elvis had got into the adjoining pen area and was sitting up on that chalet roof!

We put Elvis back in his chalet and locked the cat flap, only to find, when next we went up the garden, that he had gone!

Having spotted him well camouflaged in the shrubbery of the Fivery garden, we decided that's where he would have to stay, as we weren't going to be able easily to get him back in his pen.

Next morning, Elvis tentatively came for food, and it didn't take him long to realise that this was an okay place to be.

Elvis quickly settled into the Fivery and seems to like his new life.

So, our first attempt at not taking on any more young FIVs had failed!

Elvis is such a free spirit that we think he would have hated being shut up in a house all the time.

## Lenny

Little Lenny is an even younger FIV we tried not to take on!

We tried, and failed, to get someone to take on this little cat who had been handed in by the neighbour of his owners who had moved away and left him. He had been infected with the FIV virus and become very nervous and very thin just trying to survive. The vets at the practice in Somerset were in dispute over him, one desperate to save him and find somewhere for him to go, the other quite happy to "get rid of the problem", which some vets perceive FIV cats to be.

We felt we had no choice but to give this youngster the chance he deserved. So, vet Helen, who had done so much to help the little cat, brought him to Catwork having neutered, microchipped and vaccinated him. We called him Lenny after Helen.

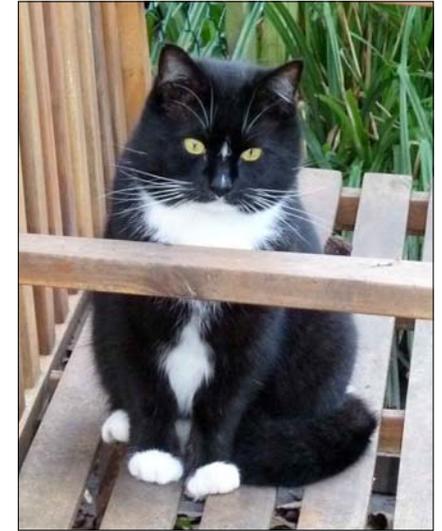
The poor little chap was very skinny and so frightened that we decided to put him in the hospital bay and work with him for fear he would go behind the chalet and hide.

It took about two weeks of coaxing before Lenny emerged fully from his hooded bed, but he was eating well, thankfully.

In time, Lenny lost his fear of us, but we felt he wouldn't do well in the Fivery with all the 'big boys', so set him up in his own chalet nearer the house where our little FeLVs used to be.

Lenny progressed in leaps and bounds but remained frightened of strangers still.

He is now, we are glad to say, chubby, confident and affectionate - quite a transformation!





### Georgie

When we received a request from a vet in Lincolnshire about helping this little cat, we said yes straight away, seeing her as a 'friend' for little Lenny who was on his own, being too

vulnerable to be in the main Fivery with the gang.

Georgie was living on a caravan site in Skegness, where the manageress had been providing food and shelter for her and her brother, having also got them neutered.

Very sadly, Georgie's brother was run over, and she herself became poorly, the reason for which was never established but, in the course of tests, she was found to be FIV positive. It was at this point that Catwork was approached about taking her on.

Our new friend, Kath, who had already been to see us, lives in Lincolnshire and, as she intended to pay us a second visit, she readily agreed to bring little Georgie down to Somerset - a trip of several hours.

All went smoothly, not a peep out of Georgie who was probably very scared. Upon arrival Georgie was installed in the sick bay, like Lenny before her.

Although very frightened at first, Georgie came round and it wasn't too long before she was able to join Lenny in the garden area with chalet that they share.

Georgie and Lenny make a very handsome black and white pair, and they get along fine. It's lovely to watch this pair of youngsters, living a protected life, growing in confidence and doing well!

Such a privilege to have been able to help little cats like these two.



### Woody

Woody was the first casualty of 2014. He had been with us since 2007, saved by vet nurse, Laura, while working at a practice in Wood street, Gloucester, where he would almost certainly have been put to sleep because of being FIV positive.



Woody attracted several members of Laura's family and friends as sponsors, as well as the lady who had been feeding him as a stray.

Woody loved being out and about in the garden and had a huge appetite.

He did extremely well until he became hyperthyroid in the autumn of 2013, but we managed to get this under control. Then Woody started losing weight again and deteriorated over the winter, necessitating euthanasia in January 2014 - cancer being high on the list as a cause of his decline.

### Thomas Redruth

As his name suggests, Thomas came from Cornwall with Ralph, who is still here, back in 2009.

The cats had been indoor pets, but, as they were constantly hungry and even raiding cupboards, they became difficult to live with and were in danger of being put to sleep, being FIV and not easy to rehome.



The nurse at the hospital they were taken to met up with a nurse from Thomas Cornwall's vet practice who suggested we might be able to help, which we did.

They were both brought to Catwork, where they shared a chalet for

sleeping, and really seemed to enjoy being out in the fresh air if they chose to be.

Towards the end, Thomas was having treatment for a bad mouth, but it became obvious that his reluctance to eat (so unusual for him) was due to more than that, which, sadly, it was.

Thomas went into acute renal failure and had to be put to sleep.

Luckily, Thomas had had several years of life enjoying the garden and eating for England!



### Jack

Jack from Wolverhampton was, unfortunately, both FIV and FeLV positive and barely lasted a year with us.

We were pleased to have given him another year, which he seemed to enjoy, when his future had looked very bleak upon the diagnosis of both

viruses. With the best will in the world, the animal-loving family he had 'adopted' could not have taken him on as they already had cats - leukaemia being the problem in terms of transmission to another cat.

Anaemia, leading to a rapid decline, and loss of appetite led to Jack having to be put to sleep.

Hopefully he had enjoyed a few months in some good weather out and about in the FeLV garden.



### Cecil

This sweetest of cats finally left us in the autumn of 2014, having survived two winters more than we had thought he would. Dear old Cecil had a wonderful habit of bouncing back just when we thought his time must surely be up.

Cecil was one of our early FIVs, coming in as a Bristol stray in 2002.

After early mouth problems, solved by a major dental, Cecil enjoyed very good

health until later in life when hyperthyroidism came along, together with IBD (irritable bowel syndrome). Cecil coped with both; he needed his thyroid tablets for the rest of his life, but his IBD cleared up. In old age, he became quite snuffly, necessitating quite a lot of "steaming".

In the summer of 2014 Cecil declined to the point where he was not getting around without difficulty. For his last days Bob made him a hospital bay in his own chalet with a grid across the doorway to prevent him falling, but still be able to enjoy the lovely sunshine and fresh air.

It was with great sadness that we had to let him go, his quality of life having gone.

We estimate that Cecil would have been about 15 or 16 years old, and we were privileged to have had the care of him.

### Sandy

We inherited this little lady in 2008 from one of our sponsors after she died. Having been 'adopted' by Sandy, her rescuer appeared to be the one person who could do anything with her. Indeed, when Sandy came to us it took a couple of months to even be able to touch her, she was so scared.

For a great deal of her time with us Sandy had her own little chalet in the garden and would come and go as she pleased.



When our extension was built, Sandy took up residence in a corner of the utility room which she made her own.

In later years, Sandy had kidney issues for which she was on daily medication and did well for a long time.

In later life, Sandy grew to love people; she adored it when visitors came and would demand attention.

Sandy's kidney problems finally got the better of her in October 2014, when she stopped eating and was not able to get around. Our vet came to the house to put her to sleep, and was greeted by Sandy. The last thing she knew was the vet making a fuss of her. She had come a long way since that scared and shaky start - well done Sandy!



### George

Always one of Barbara's favourites, being elderly, blind and vulnerable, George was with us for nearly four years.

We fetched him in 2011 from Berkshire, where he'd been taken to the vet used by our CLAWS friends; elderly, black, blind and FIV+, not a lot going for him! We were pleased to give him sanctuary for the rest of his days.

George quickly learnt where everything was and became quite adept at climbing up high on the mini-chalet roof to finish off Harry's breakfast every morning!

When George started losing weight, tests were done which revealed he had a liver problem, and was put on medication - also monthly shots of laurabolin, which boosts the system. George, during 2014 was losing weight steadily despite eating extremely well. Liver cancer was suspected, about which nothing could be done.

Sadly for us, George's last day was Christmas Day; he had his breakfast as usual, and took himself off to his heated bed, in which he was found that evening, having died at some point during that day. This rather took the edge off Christmas, but was a nice way for George to go. He was such a dear old boy.

## UPDATE ON THE PRESENT CATWORK CATS

### THE FIVs

#### Thomas Cornwall - this year's front cover cat

Confident, reliable Thomas has been with us since 2007 and is still sponsored by his rescuers down in Cornwall at whose farm he showed up as a stray.

Thomas enjoys good health, loves his food and visitors and is one of those "easy to run" cats.



#### Bertie

We have had Bertie since 2008 when he was found next door, seemingly dumped.

When nobody claimed him, we got him neutered and microchipped and, being FIV positive, he simply stayed.

Bertie has been in good health so far and is a quietly affectionate cat.

#### Jasper

Jasper, rescued from the RSPCA in Wales in 2006 by friend Mary, is now one of our oldest residents.

His health was good in 2014, but he needed a dental.

Jasper still loves our visitors and being the centre of attention when he can be.





### Guy

Now in his teens, Guy, who arrived from Bristol on Bonfire Night in 2004, had no health issues until a couple of years ago, since when he has had more tests than any cat in the garden!

Guy's problem is that he wants to eat ravenously all the time, yet remains very thin and often losing weight. All the usual causes for him being so ravenous have been ruled out several

times; the only clue would appear to be a thickening of the gut (seen during an ultrasound) which probably means poor absorption of the food.

Guy has 'sprinkles' on his meals which aid absorption, and fortnightly injections to maximise the goodness of his food intake.

Were it not for his extreme thinness, Guy would be a rather handsome tabby cat.

### Thomas Worcester

Rescued from the Worcester Cats Protection, where he was in danger of being put to sleep because of being quite poorly when found as a stray, Thomas did well once he had recovered from severe anaemia. Thomas' biggest problem now is his stomatitis (sore mouth) which we have been wrestling with for some time with varying degrees of success.



At present we seem to have achieved a good degree of pain control with ovarid, which is an anti-inflammatory, and the frequency of administration is worked out by trial and error.

Thomas has quite a 'presence' and stands no nonsense from the cats he clearly considers his inferiors.

### Sam

This little cat has done so well since he came in 2011, all the way from Stoke-on-Trent, where he was found in a terrible physical condition by his rescuer and was also clearly very psychologically traumatised. Nursed back to physical and mental health, Sam, who apparently had been left to fend for himself when his owners moved away, is today a confident sturdy cat, whose only health issue is his sore mouth, which we are able to keep comfortable with daily medication.



### Trevor

Trevor, who came from a FIV-friendly vet practice in Southampton in 2011, had another good year with no health issues.

Trevor is a friendly, undemanding little cat who fits in around the others without problem.



### Mr Mog

Mr Mog, coming from Bristol in 2011, also had a healthy year.

He is a bit wary of the others, but there are no real problems. He is playful, skittish and quite a character.



### BT

This little cat has also managed seven years of life since he was so nearly put to sleep at a Berkshire vets. The phone call from Catwork saying we would take him saved his life - just in the nick of time (hence his name, BT).

Early in 2014, we noticed BT had an eye problem, which may have started with a bad scratch. Our vet was quite pessimistic

as to whether BT's eye could be saved, but after several trips a day up the garden applying eye ointment for quite some time, and lots of vet examinations, BT's eye did recover. He soon got back to normal and stopped trying to hide when he saw us coming!

### Ralph

Ralph has been with us since 2009, coming from an indoor home in Cornwall with companion cat Thomas, who died last year.

Ralph enjoys good health, his one issue being stomatitis (sore mouth) which we are able to treat with twice weekly medication enabling him to eat comfortably - which he likes to do!

Ralph doesn't put himself forward much but, on his own, can be quite affectionate.



### Toby

Toby, coming in 2011 from a 'rescue' that destroys FIVs in Southampton, has matured and filled out. Having shaken off his 'bolshy' teenage stage, he has grown into a nice sturdy cat.

Toby had a good year healthwise in 2014. His name is derived from "To be or not to be", his life having been very much in the balance as a very young cat in that 'rescue'!



### Harry

The lovely, big, and very nervous Harry came with his brother, Barley, whom we lost to kidney cancer in 2013, from Bath Cats and Dogs Home in 2010.

So sad that Harry, being such an affectionate cat with others, has now lost two companions - his brother and, recently, blind George.

Harry has turned to Plucky for friendship, but the pair have to be kept separate at night because of our needing to know Plucky's food intake for insulin purposes.

Harry has warmed a bit towards humans (on a good day he will let Barbara fuss him) but still remains wary most of the time.

Harry had a skin problem in 2014 which, luckily, a jab sorted out as we would never have been able to put ointment on him!



### Plucky

Little Plucky, our amazing survivor and winner of the 2013 Pet Oscars at our vets, has got through the year, during which his true character has emerged. He is quite a determined little character; after all, it must have



been will power that enabled him to cope with all his many issues - the biggest neck wound our vet had seen, requiring 85 stitches, eye ulcers, bad teeth and diabetes - on top of all this, the elderly chap was at first absolutely terrified of people.

As 2014 progressed, Plucky was interacting with the visitors, enjoying treats and the company of Harry and George.

He grew more and more fussy with his food, which makes the giving of his insulin more tricky.

Unfortunately, towards the end of the year Plucky appeared to have yet another health issue. (Why do some cats get so many problems

while others escape unscathed?) It would appear from an ultrasound scan that Plucky's liver is abnormal, and as his state of health is too precarious to anaesthetise him to do a biopsy, we do not know if the strange cells are new growth or something sinister. All we can do is put him on daily liver supplement capsules.

When we took on Plucky from Liverpool in 2013 we had no idea what could be done for him, or how long he might be with us. All the work that has gone into him has been worth it to see such an abused little cat transformed in every way.



### **Oscar** (fostered)

Moira, in Leicester, fosters Oscar for us as she kindly provided him with a home when we had no room to take him.

Nervous at first, he soon got to realise he was safe and would be fed regularly and has been fine for several years.

Oscar originated from Dorset, being taken to a vet hospital after being found

collapsed by the side of the road. He was, in fact, not injured. Proving to be FIV positive, he was going to be put down! Imagine escaping an accident and then being killed because of FIV! These things still happen!

Anyway, Oscar was lucky as the nurse looking after him put a lot of effort into finding somewhere for him to go and, thanks to Moira, he has a great life with several other FIV friends.

## **THE FeLVs**

### **Danny**

Danny came to us from Birmingham in 2010 as quite a youngster. He is unlikely to have been born with the virus, however, or he would not have survived this long - the one lesson we learned from all our FeLV kittens in 2013 was that cats born with the virus don't often make it to their first birthday.



When Danny became unwell early in the year with a respiratory infection, we feared the worst - that the virus had 'kicked in' and he would be on the downward spiral.

However, Danny recovered well from the infection and went on to have a good year, enjoying the fine weather and the visitors.

Towards the end of the year, Danny seemed to be having trouble eating so, suspecting a mouth issue, he was taken to the vet, who discovered, on examination, something sinister - a hard swelling in the abdomen.

An x-ray confirmed our vet's suspicion that the lump was a lymphoma which would grow and spread, and he gave Danny just a few weeks to live, saying his condition wasn't painful.

As this book was being put together, we had to have poor Danny put to sleep in January, just three weeks from the diagnosis.

The speed of the FeLV virus, once activated, never fails to surprise us.



### **Charlie**

Charlie was a stray in Worcester who was brought to us in 2011 by his rescuers, Dorinda, and Steve.

Charlie, who had no ID and was found to be leukaemia positive, didn't look as if he would have much of a future, until friend Jayne found our sanctuary.

Charlie, so far, has enjoyed very good health, but with the FeLV virus, we

know that can change, all of a sudden, and without much warning. Charlie, as of early 2015, is now our only leukaemia cat, which is rather sad, as he likes the company of others, but the FeLV virus is so serious that we cannot risk endangering other cats by letting him mix.

Charlie can see and watch the other cats - particularly Lenny and Georgie - and he now has a large garden to run about in.

## THE OLDIES



### Baggy

Blind Baggy came to us when his owner had to move into rented accommodation and was not allowed to have a cat.

We were able to house him in a chalet with surrounding enclosed garden area where he

coped very well, even acquiring an elderly female companion, Jemima, rescued by our vets. Sadly, Jemima only had a year with us but seemed to enjoy it.

Baggy was not alone for too long, as we took back Brandy from foster care at his fosterer's request. The two elderly gentlemen enjoyed the summer in their garden chalet and, when the new cat room was ready for use in December, they moved in together to live in their cosy, heated sitting room just before the cold weather.

Blind Baggy, not disorientated for long, soon learnt all about his new surroundings, including finding the cat flap set at a higher level in the wall, which leads into their enclosed garden area. The weather having turned very cold, we don't see much of them wanting to go out into the garden!

Baggy is a lovely old cat, a really nice character and very affectionate.

### Brandy

Brandy had been one of the early cats we had homed back in the mid-nineties when his owner had to move and couldn't take him with her. Brandy was found a home in Minehead without actually being in care at Catwork.

Brandy lived an eventful life in Minehead, moving several times along with other cats and his eccentric cat-loving owner, who did not hesitate to call out the fire brigade once when Brandy appeared to be stuck up a tree!



When Mrs Murphy, his owner, died, Brandy went missing but, thanks to his Catwork microchip, he was able to be traced when found.

Sue, who found Brandy, said she would like to keep him, so this she did on a fostering arrangement.

Several years later Brandy was causing Sue a few problems, so we said we would take him back to spend the rest of his days at Catwork.

The old gent underwent a full MOT which showed no health issues - amazing for his age!

As we'd hoped, Brandy and Baggy formed a nice geriatric duo, and, now they live together in the cat room, having spent the summer in the garden chalet.

Brandy has had a good year and seems to be doing exceptionally well for his age, which must be around 20.

## THE HOUSECATS



### Millie

Our oldest housecat and always Barbara's favourite, had us on pins throughout most of 2014 with one health scare after another.

Barbara so wanted her to make it for her 'big' birthday in May, and indeed she did, and is still with us into 2015.

Millie is one of our earliest rescues and the 'model' for the Catwork logo.

She was brought to us as an extremely terrified stray of about 6 months in 1996, which suggests she was born in the autumn of 1995, making her approaching 20 years old.

Millie has coped well with being hyperthyroid and with kidney issues for a long time, but now has what the vet calls little 'events' (mini seizures), every now and then.

When one such event caused her to go off her back legs we really thought her 'time' had come, but the vet gave us pills which carry oxygen to the brain, and got her moving around again - we call them Millie's 'magic pills', and are ongoing.

We know that Millie can't possibly be with us for too much longer, and the day we have to lose her will be one of the saddest. All we can do for now, which is emotionally extremely hard, is monitor her on a daily basis. As long as she still eats, purrs and shambles around, we will enjoy her company.

### Marmaduke

Brought to the door as a tiny kitten unable to use his back leg, Marmaduke was found by the side of the village bypass, back in 2002.

Our vet was able to fix his leg in an operation that was difficult as Marmie was so tiny. The bones in his back leg had begun to heal in the wrong position, making it look like he may have been stepped on, which meant he couldn't walk; and then he was abandoned!

After a traumatic start in life and much cage rest, Marmaduke

has had a remarkably healthy life, being able to climb, run and jump just like any normal cat.

In 2014 we felt, unusually, he seemed a bit 'off colour', so decided to get him checked out by our vet as, since those very early days, he had no health issues. All the blood tests came back absolutely normal, and Marmie was pronounced fit and well, which is excellent news as he must now be in his teens.

Marmaduke still maintains his naughty streak and his position as the 'meet and greet cat' when visitors come.





### Jack

Our lovely gentle giant, Jack, has not had such a good year. Having, a few years back, been diagnosed with a heart problem, his myopathy got worse during last year, necessitating an ultrasound, which revealed considerable thickening of the heart muscle, causing fluid build up.

Jack is now on much medication - no less than four different tablets amounting

to eight tablets a day given at different intervals - our kitchen worktop resembles a pharmacy, and that's just for Jack!

Jack, like Marmaduke, had been found in the village and brought to us as no more than a kitten in 2005. We are so glad we kept him as a pet as he has had more than his fair share of health problems.

Despite everything, Jack remains placid, gentle and good-natured, whatever we need to do to him.

### Polly

Polly is another little local stray we ended up keeping in 2006. Nobody claimed her and she was obviously of a very nervous disposition. We even lost her for two weeks in the early days and, despite searching for her every day, she managed to elude us and made her way across the village to the home where she had first appeared. We were so pleased to get her back, and, as she is so easily spooked, she became an indoor cat.



Polly has five toes (polydactyl). She enjoys good health and specially loves the log fire of a winter evening.

### Oliver

This little chap was found by the postman at Christmas time 2007, in a country lane. Nobody ever claimed him, so another little black cat joined the Hunt household.

Oliver is an indoor cat who loves his creature comforts - food and warmth, and can often be found snuggled up close to the radiator.

As a youngster, Oliver had a bad urinary blockage, which necessitated a spell in hospital. Since then, Oliver has capsules which help to prevent this painful problem recurring. Thankfully, Oliver has remained fit and well.



### Little Man

Little Man came from a farm in Worcester in 2012, where in-breeding was rife, and causing all sorts of deformities. Little Man's 'problem' was a dramatic head tilt which made it look as if his head was put on the wrong way round!

Poor little chap, despite this, was lively and happy. Two of our Worcester friends rescued him, but it was clear he was going to need some drastic work to sort him out, if that was possible.

Indeed, our vet was able to sort out Little Man's head tilt, extracting a large polyp from his ear.

Since then little Man has been fine and grown into a solid, active little cat with quite a naughty streak - he loves to wind up the older cats and is very vocal. He loves the laser chaser which he finds extremely fascinating, but still can't figure out where it 'goes' when it disappears!



### Sooty

Sooty came from Worcester in 2012, where her owner was finding life difficult and was only too pleased to hand her over to friend Jayne for rehoming. She was in a bit of a state, but it was all superficial and her coat grew back and looked fine.

Sooty is a very determined old lady and one of the fussiest cats we've yet encountered! Although very tiny, she can certainly scare off the older, bigger cats - a look is enough, but she'll add a smack round the head of

anyone passing too close (which they try hard not to do!)

Sooty loves a lap and although often extremely frustrating with her eating habits, can be quite sweet.

### Coco

Big, black, but very nervous Coco, has lived with us as a house cat since 2011, when Barbara brought him back from Eastbourne. She had gone to do the launch of our book on FIV cats, staying with friend Maureen in Sussex, where she got to hear about the terminally ill lady Coco had adopted as a stray, desperate to find a home for him (knowing that nervous black cats are not the easiest to find homes for).



Barbara said we'd help, thinking that we could easily 'absorb' a 1 year old little cat into the household - this youngster turned out to be a giant who remains scared of dogs and most people to this day. With us he is fine and quietly affectionate.

### Darcy

Darcy rabbit, now getting on in years, needed a dental in 2014. Rabbits are not good with anaesthetics, so he was monitored very carefully and not allowed home until he was eating properly on his own. Back home after several days' hospitalisation, Darcy did well.



One day, much to Darcy's dismay, Barbara accidentally trod on and broke his beloved 'tinkling' ball. Bob went off to get a replacement, but it was some days before Darcy deigned to select one of the two balls on offer and play with it!

Darcy is a great little character and so friendly.

## FIV - Some progress, but a long way to go

At long last we feel we are seeing a slight change in attitude towards FIV cats amongst some vets and rescues, although there still remain many who consider that FIV cats should be put down.

So, the battle goes on. Some progress has been made since those early days in the mid-nineties when our first FIV cat came into our lives. It was at a time when most cats found to be FIV positive were being destroyed, and there was a great need for a sanctuary such as ours.

The cats who came to us have taught us a great deal about the virus and how relatively innocuous it is, and they are the basis for our website, our book and our firmly held opinions about FIV.

### Dangers from some vets

The vets who are still in the Dark Ages on the FIV question often base their opinions on early, flawed experiments done in the 80s and 90s when lab cats were injected with massive doses of the virus and, not surprisingly, did not do very well. This is not what happens naturally. A naturally infected cat would receive a minute dose of the virus, which develops very slowly and almost imperceptibly, not having much effect on the cat's immune system for a very long time, enabling it to live as healthily and long as a non FIV cat.

### Dangers from 'Rescue' organisations

From what we hear, the RSPCA are probably still the worst offenders for putting down FIVs.

Our remarkable rescue, Donny, was lucky to have escaped being put down by the RSPCA because he was FIV, even after a court case convicting his owner of cruelty. Luckily for Donny, a temporary vet, knowing of Catwork asked if we would take him, and one of the vet nurses spoke up for him (and has been in touch lately). Donny came to Catwork and lived happily in the sanctuary for many years.

A few RSPCA centres are giving FIV cats a chance, but they tend to be the more independent centres, not ones dictated to by head office.

The Blue Cross still persists in false thinking about testing kittens under six months for FIV, and wrongly expecting to get an accurate result.

It was worrying to read an article about kittens in 'Your Cat' magazine, widely read by many people, written by a senior PDSA vet, in which a section on FIV was almost totally wrong, or at best very misleading. We wrote, twice, to the editor with our concerns about that part of the article, but never received a reply.

Thankfully, a more recent article on FIV published in the same magazine, is much better informed and balanced.

What we find very worrying is that many Cats "Protection" branches these days are still getting vets to test un-neutered strays for FIV, and authorising that they be put down if positive!

Individual branches do vary in their attitude to FIV; we know several who do all they can to help them, but we also know of quite a few groups who follow the 'destructive' policy.

### Blackie's example seems especially bad -

Currently we are heavily involved with a local case where a much loved and well cared-for one-time stray was taken by its owners to be neutered with financial help from the local CP branch. Blackie, the cat in question, was going back to its owners and they were not told that a blood test would be done, or the implications of a positive result, or they would not have agreed.

Blackie did test positive and was put down by the vet used by the



*Blackie - learning to trust his new owners, only to be betrayed by 'rescue' !*

branch, without giving the owners any choice in the matter.

Blackie had not been signed over to Cats Protection, so nobody had the right to authorise his destruction - how bad can it get?

The owners are heartbroken, and we are so angry that we are demanding answers from all concerned as to how this could have happened. Watch our website as we intend exposing all the bad events we come across, so people are more aware of what could happen to any stray they may have befriended and think they have 'saved'.

### The lucky can escape the policy -

This policy of Cats Protection to test cats who are found as strays, and, if found to be positive for FIV, to put them down, is so wrong in our view. One positive outcome, despite the policy, is shown with Flynn (mentioned in previous yearbooks) where the vet concerned was not prepared to put him down and sought an alternative solution.

Fortunately, two of our supporters, Viv and Roger, stepped up to the plate and took him on. Although Flynn was very nervous, he has turned into the most affectionate and loving cat, thanks to Viv and Roger's patience and care. So it just shows how, despite Cats Protection's bad policy, a caring vet can help find a positive solution - but our real concern is that Flynn should never have been in danger from such a policy in the first place.



*Flynn - saved, twice!*

### Possibly the worst example yet -

Another heartbreaking story involved a so-called "rescue" centre in Lincolnshire, which had cared for a group of FIV cats for several years. Suddenly all eight remaining, apparently healthy, FIV cats, some quite young, were put down, all on the same day, because they had so-called 'mouth problems'.

Our new friend and supporter, who used to visit and groom the FIV gang there for several years, was absolutely heartbroken, especially as she and her husband had been aware of the danger, and had offered

to pay for and build an area for them in their large garden, and take them all on themselves for the rest of their lives.

We wrote to the "rescue" saying we had never come across a situation where FIV cats had needed to be put to sleep because of some mouth 'viral' problem, especially not eight on the same day. We asked them if they would tell us what had happened to necessitate such an outcome. Needless to say we met with a blank wall of silence. Our fear is that those poor dear cats just required proper veterinary care.

Without a proper explanation, we cannot imagine what valid reason there could have been for their destruction. If there really was a valid reason, surely they would have explained? (see photos of the eight unfortunate cats, over the page).

### Rescued - to die?

Rescued - a young and healthy stray;  
My life was turned around that day.  
Put in a cage while 'tests' were done -  
I wished I was back on the run!  
The tests showed I had FIV?  
It seemed it was bad news for me.  
I really can't imagine why  
The test means that I have to die!  
I was just trying to survive  
And scrounge enough to stay alive.  
I'm only young, good-looking, strong -  
They surely must have got it wrong!  
I've been betrayed if I'm to die,  
And 'rescue' is just one big lie.

Lincolnshire 'rescue' FIV cats - all eight put down on the same day with, so far, no understandable reason (see previous page).



Archie



Betty



Bob



George



Norman



Tabby



Rufus



William

### Now to more positive happenings on the FIV front:

One source of information that many vets look to for advice on cat matters is ICC (International Cat Care) formally known as FAB (Feline Advisory Bureau) which, at last, has updated their information about FIV, and, we're pleased to say, is far more balanced than it used to be. The one thing we still take issue with is where they suggest that FIV can be transmitted via mutual grooming and shared food bowls. This may be theoretically true, but in practice there is no evidence that it actually happens (we are currently building evidence on this - more later). However, the fact that ICC suggests it is a problem, actually becomes the problem. As so many vets, together with the major rescue organisations, take notice, this leads to the advice and policy that FIV cats have to be kept separate from other cats, which dramatically reduces the potential homes for them - all without real foundation.

The vet who saved the life of young Lenny (see new arrivals) and brought him to us, is involved with ICC and has used two of our cats, now no longer with us, Captain and Cecil, as examples of FIVs who had good long lives with hardly any health issues, until they were very old. So, hopefully, some positive influence will be found there.

One vet student from Nottingham University also used the health records of all our FIV cats as data for her dissertation on FIV.

So, in 2014, academia found our work of interest, and, as vets are more likely to take notice of academic papers, rather than our experience over many years, that is helpful, although, in fact, we have probably seen and lived with more FIV cats than most vets will see in a lifetime!

These days, more and more people are doing their own research and, if they come across our website, often ask for our book on FIV, while those abroad are sent a digital version of it.

From the feedback we get, we know that a lot of people have been helped and encouraged by it, thus helping the FIV cats they are dealing with.

One such person was our new found friend, Seppo, from Helsinki, who found our website after adopting FIV Sasha from a local rescue in Finland. Seppo visited us twice in 2014, having fallen in love with the cats here. He took a copy of the book back to Finland for the shelter from where he has also adopted a little non-FIV female stray, assuring the shelter



*Siiri and Sasha in Finland*

people that FIV would not be a problem as long as the cats get along, which they do. Little Siiri, we are told, treats big Sasha like a godson. Well done, Seppo, for spreading the good news about FIV in Helsinki - he has even offered to translate sections for those in Finland!

### A new project - 1000 FIV cats

We are convinced that our FIV cats are not unique in having good health and long lives. This, together with the feedback we receive from FIV cat owners, has led us to cast the net wider seeking data on FIV cats.

We are inviting owners of FIV cats from across the world to tell us their cats' stories so we can collate the information into a meaningful form with regard to their background, health, longevity, attitudes the owners meet to FIV etc.

We are collating the information on a new section of our website where the information can be viewed by all as the project develops. The "1,000 FIV Cats Project" was launched in early December through various FIV groups and forums on the Internet. The responses and cats' stories started coming in immediately and grew as the word seemed to spread quickly around all countries of the world (I think we could claim it went a bit 'viral', ironically!) and we have barely started making contact with all those we know of through the book requests.

It is encouraging that, so far, all the responses seem to echo our own experience, in that their FIV cats' health issues are not significantly different to those of any other cat.

As we type this, well over 400 cats' stories have been processed and analysis of the results begun.

To return to our previous point about "casual transmission of FIV";

of the current 440 or so FIV cats listed, over 65% are living in homes together with non-FIV cats, so far without a single report of transmission - hopefully, when we reach our target of 1,000 cats, if the same pattern continues, we should be able to start making a difference to the understanding on that front at least!

It is early days yet, so 'watch this space', and see what benefits to FIV cats in the future can be gained from this collection of 'real-life' information from around the world. (www.fivcats.org if you want to have a look at progress so far.)

### For the future:

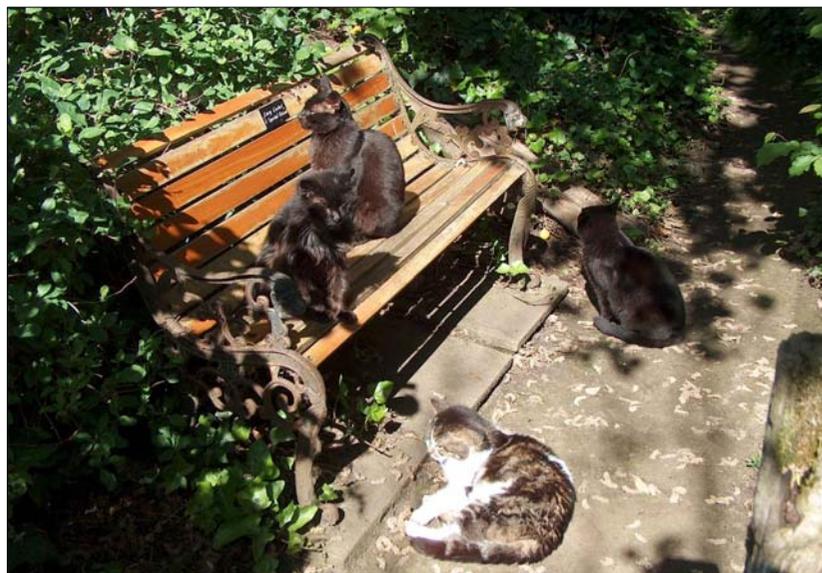
Challenging all inaccuracies we find in information put out about FIV

Collecting as much information we can for the FIV cats project.

Using whatever influence we can to help save FIV cats' lives everywhere.

Challenging all cases we hear of where FIV cats have been 'betrayed'.

Oh, and continuing to care for the cats in the sanctuary, of course!



### Catwork is now listed on Easyfundraising.org.uk

You may already be aware of easyfundraising.org.uk, but in case not, it is a scheme which is supported by thousands of the major retailers, whereby, when you make an on-line purchase, the retailer donates a small percentage to your nominated 'good cause'.

It costs you absolutely nothing, but you need to register with easyfundraising.co.uk and tell them you want donations from your purchases to go to "Catwork".

Then, as long as you click the extra 'easyfundraising' link, we will receive a small donation every time you make a purchase.

Can't be bad, can it?

If you would like to support us that way please:

1. go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) to see details.
2. Register, and nominate '**Catwork**' as your "**Good Cause**"
3. Click to install the '**Donation Reminder**' - this adds an app to your browser, so when in future you go to a participating retailer's website, a yellow band appears to tell you they are part of the scheme, and lets you click to make anything you purchase generate a donation to Catwork from the retailer - it costs you nothing!
4. Do lots of on-line shopping! - and remember to click on the yellow bar before you buy - then Catwork gets a little donation from the retailer from each purchase.

Many thanks!