



THE CATWORK YEAR

2016

## Harry

Our front cover cat this year

FIV Harry seems a fitting subject for our front cover this year, as 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of our work with FIVs, which began in 1997 with another Harry, also ginger and extremely nervous, just like our present one.

Harry came to us with his brother, Barley, in 2010 from Bath Cats and Dogs Home where they had been for a long time, being almost impossible to rehome because of their fear of humans. The brothers were inseparable; sadly Barley died from kidney cancer in 2013, since when Harry has been a friend to any sick or nervous cat needing a helping paw.

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## The Catwork Year 2016

2016 was hard for us emotionally, as we lost several of our FIV friends, some expected, others not, who had been with us for many years. We took in several special needs cats, including the old and the terrified - all of whom would not have stood a chance of being rehomed in a mainstream rescue.

Catwork's remit has always been to help the special needs, which for most of our rescue time have been FIVs. Nowadays, at last, more FIVs are getting a chance of a home.

Spring found Bob undertaking repair projects: chalets, roofing and garden benches, many of which were falling apart! Also, the garden area near the house which Darcy rabbit had occupied (yes, we lost our lovely rabbit as well) was reconfigured, as we had decided that Darcy would be our last rabbit. It was so strange not to be looking out at Mr Darcy's antics; even the cats seemed to miss him.

In late spring, Barbara had a lovely weekend in Windsor, staying with son Ted and Anna (newly engaged). She spent much of the time with cat friends in the area.

Friend and supporter Aysa gave her a memorable day out at an historic hotel set in beautiful grounds. After a look around and lunch on the terrace, the afternoon was spent back at Aysa's where Barbara at last met Aysa's cat, Mia, about whom she had heard so much.

The following day was mostly spent with members of CLAWS (Cat Lovers Animal Welfare Society) with whom we have had a long relationship. A buffet lunch had been organised, enjoyed outside in Beverley's large garden, and Barbara saw the new 'Golden Oldies'

chalet with its inhabitants and all the other rescue cats. Such a great weekend, lovely weather and lots of cat chat.

Late spring, summer and autumn brought our visitors to Catwork, a time the cats enjoy - fusses and treats all round.

In November, two of our cats needed intensive veterinary care and hospitalisation, so we found ourselves hospital visiting in an attempt to reassure the cats they hadn't been abandoned, and because Barbara misses them so much when absent! Strange that, with so many cats, the loss of one individual, whether it has died or just temporarily absent, feels very odd.

As Christmas approached, cards and donations arrived, often from



*Julie and Kim meet some of the cats when they deliver Shadow.*



*Lesley gives Jasper some fuss.*



*The cold weather didn't put Kath off her first visit.*



*Sara and Lyn chose a sunny day for their visit, here with Trevor and Barney.*



*Aysa finally gets to introduce her Mia to Barbara.*

people we have known from the earliest days, and for which we are truly grateful.

This year we would like to thank the trustees of the Robert Cave Memorial Trust, who considered Catwork to be a worthy recipient of a sum of money as a bequest. The Trust had been set up to help animal rescuers in the South West. We had hoped to put aside the unexpected windfall as a cushion against hard times, but hard times came more quickly than we had anticipated in the form of a large vet bill in November for two cats who needed intensive care and a period of hospitalisation.

We were also remembered in the will of another supporter, Ruth Hirst, who wanted to bequest money to Catwork; sadly, after all fees



*Sally-Anne and Andrew meet the gang when they deliver Pepperpot, their stray rescue.*



*Pepps seems more interested in the treats than Danni, who also helped him as a stray.*



*Rachel has the treats, so gets the attention, while Mary cuddles Jasper.*



*Dorinda and Jayne give Trevor some attention on their summer visit.*

and costs had been paid, there was no money left to distribute. It was a lovely thought and we are grateful. Ruth had been an ardent cat lover and keen supporter of Forest of Dean Cats Protection, and admired Catwork as well.

A big thank you as always to all those who have sponsored and supported Catwork through the year - too many to mention individually - we could not do this without you!

Our thanks to the staff of Quantock Veterinary Hospital who look after our cats when ill. Congratulations to them for, once again, being awarded the Gold Standard for Cat Care from the organisation International Cat Care.



*Helen has a welcome cup of tea whilst getting to know Pepps (Mr Felix Pepperpot).*



*Jayne catches up on the Catwork gossip from Jason, and Solo listens in.*



*The cats tell Pete they won't even look at him if he doesn't open those biscuits!*



*That's more like it - Stan watches as Dot dishes out the treats and gets the cats' attention.*

At the beginning of 2017 Catwork was home to 30 cats, consisting of FIVs, 1 FeLV, special needs, oldies and housecats.



Vet Dee cuddles her protige Albert.



Phil gives Jasper some fuss...



while Chrissie's attention is on Solo.



Barbara's daughter Dora, with Ben, Romily and Trevor.



Barbara's granddaughter Romily has a quiet fuss with Barney.



Vera visits the oldies in the cat room (with treats).



Vivien and Sue with Trevor and Jasper when they visit their late mother's cat Toby.



Barbara's son Ted and Anna visit the cat room, with our long time friend and supporter Judy.

## NEW ARRIVALS IN 2016



### Shadow

Our first new cat of 2016 was a cat we named Shadow - one of our biggest challenges yet, in as much as he was absolutely terrified.

He had been living amongst a feral colony which had to be moved, and Shadow was the only one with FIV, so couldn't join them at the rescue.

We were told that, even though scared, he liked to be stroked, but it was a long time before we found this to be true. Being confined to a cage is a bit different to having more space in which to get away from people.

Shadow spent the first couple of weeks in the sick bay, so he could get used to us and the Catwork routine. He was so scared that even touching his hooded bed would send him flying across the pen to hide somewhere else. All we could see of him were the terrified eyes of a very scared cat!

We called him Shadow as we only ever caught a glimpse of him in those early days.

We managed to move Shadow into his own enclosed area with his own chalet where he would hide under the shelf and hiss at us. Touching him was completely out of the question.

We set up a wildlife camera trap to see what he got up to when we weren't there, and found that he came out very soon after we'd left and would begin washing himself, looking quite relaxed! He had been eating well, so that was good.

After a couple of months, the day finally came when Barbara was able to touch him! From then on, in his own time, Shadow's confidence grew, and it wasn't long before he was having breakfast with the other cats, and keeping close to 'guard cat' Harry.

These days, although easily startled and wary of strangers, Shadow spends his days in his preferred chalet, no longer on his own, going from heated bed to heated bed, making the most of his protected life - we suspect he had at least a couple of very cold winters outside, and seems reluctant to leave his warmth and comfort this winter - and yes, he does like to be stroked!



*Shadow's progress... from terrified...*



*...to relaxed but wary...*



*...to trusting and enjoying a fuss!*



*Justin*



*Jemma*

## Justin and Jemma

This sweet pair of cats (almost certainly brother and sister) were found in a taped up box outside a supermarket. They were taken to the local vet, understandably traumatised, and not in a good condition.

Cleaned up and blood tested, Justin tested positive for leukaemia virus, and Jemma negative.

This being the case, the vet separated the cats, but Jemma seemed to need her brother, so they were reunited again despite Justin's leukaemia status.

Barbara was asked by a vet nurse who lives in our village and occasionally worked at the vets where the cats were, if we could possibly take FeLV Justin who was about to be put to sleep.

We felt so sorry for these little cats after what happened to them

that we agreed - just in time; hence the male cat's name. We also took the female as all local rescues were full and, having lived closely with her brother, it would appear she had immunity to the virus. When tested three months later, Jemma, as we called her, was still negative.

When we went to collect them, we found they looked so alike that we had difficulty telling them apart - so the vets put paper collars on them with their names on to help us out.

Both cats had been given dentals - poor Justin's mouth was so bad that the jawbone was showing through the gum on one side.

Only the most essential dental work was done at the time of neutering, as we didn't want him to be put through too much unnecessary stress, which could be dangerous to a FeLV cat.

Our vet did a further dental some months later, which has enabled Justin to eat well again.

We don't feel the cats had been abused, just neglected, as they aren't scared of people. Who knows what led their owner to tape them in a box and leave them? Putting the box by a supermarket made it likely they would be found, which, fortunately, they were.

Of the two, Justin is more 'up front' with a healthy appetite, and Jemma very sweet but more diffident and sometimes a bit intolerant of her brother!

Both cats have done really well and whatever time Justin has, at least his life didn't end a year ago because of leukaemia virus.

### **Mr Felix Pepperpot**

This cat was being fed by two people (and possibly others) each unaware of the other. One lady called him Mr Pepperpot, the other, Felix - hence his elaborate name.

One weekend last summer Pepps appeared with a bad neck ulcer, and food source Danni called the RSPCA for help. (Food source Sally-Anne was away that weekend and, anyway, at this point the two ladies didn't know each other.)

Pepps was taken off to Birmingham RSPCA centre where he was treated and, as usual with unneutered strays, blood tested and found to be FIV+. Sally-Anne, returning from her weekend away wondered where Pepps the stray was. It was only by virtue of the fact that Danni was putting leaflets around for her own cat who was missing, that the two feeders met. They swapped notes about Pepps the stray and panicked how to get him rescued from RSPCA who had said he would be put down if unclaimed after a week, because of FIV - yes, they are still in the dark ages about the virus at some centres!



Sally-Anne and Danni frantically went on the Internet to find help for Pepps - now on death row!

They both, unknown to each other, found Catwork and emails arrived the same morning asking for our help.

We quickly realised that both ladies were talking about the same black and white cat. We were concerned, however, how he could be saved. Sally-Anne phoned and asked to adopt him and, after an anxious wait, was told that he would be released on condition he was kept as an indoor cat.



*Pepps gets a special Christmas cracker from Sally-Anne*



*Although a bit of a loner, Pepps struck up a friendship with Trevor*

Next day, after collecting the now neutered and microchipped cat with the grand name of Mr Felix Pepperpot, Sally-Anne and her husband brought him to Catwork. What a narrow escape he'd had!

Pepps turned out to be a cat with attitude and a very loud, persistent miaow - we nicknamed him "Shouty McShoutFace".

As summer progressed, we noticed that Pepps was drinking and urinating excessively and suspected he could be diabetic which, after hospital tests, proved to be the case.

Pepps has to have two doses of insulin after food, am and pm, so Bob is getting even more exercise going up the garden to give the injections every 12 hours. Pepps is also now on special diabetic diet, which is slow release nutrition, and has to be monitored at intervals at the hospital with tests to determine

if his insulin levels are satisfactory. He loves going to the hospital for the day where he takes much interest in all the proceedings and is given a lot of fuss and attention.

Quite a story.

## Holly, Hattie and Ginge

This lovely trio of oldies came as a family group in the summer of 2016. Their owner had signed them over to the RSPCA along with four younger ones, being unable to look after them any longer.



The fact that Ginge (the male) and Holly were FIV+ meant they would be difficult to rehome. Holly's sister, Hattie, was negative, but they were very bonded.

Holly also had other health problems - kidney issues and a heart murmur. The RSPCA centre in Wales was the one where friend Mary works and she got involved with these cats - Jasper and Darcy rabbit had come to us through Mary.

We said we would take all three, much to the surprise of the management, given Holly's health problems - but if she wasn't 'special needs' who was?

Mary and a friend brought the trio of oldies down and they took up residence in the purpose-built cat room in the extension. Each immediately chose the bed they fancied and settled in as if they had been here a long time!



This little gang of three really cheered us up after all our sad losses - they are real little characters and quite delightful.

## Holly

Holly, the most compromised of the group, is a real sweetie. She looked quite pathetic on arrival and weighed well under 2Kg. We're pleased to say that she quickly doubled her weight and is on medication for her kidney problems and a partial renal diet. Holly is an affectionate old lady who is doing well.



## Hattie

Hattie is also in her mid teens and appears to have no health issues. She is the most vocal of the trio.

Hattie is an affectionate old lady who loves her food, her cat companions, especially her sister, and people.

## Ginge

Ginge is a mischievous, but affectionate little cat, aged about 14 and FIV positive. He's the one who likes to pop out through the cat flap and take a turn in the outside area linked to their room. He likes to give the others (and us) a friendly nip - a real cheeky chappie who brings a smile to our faces.



## Albert

Albert was found, an elderly stray, in a sorry state and very hungry, wandering in Bridgwater and taken to our vets. He was checked out and his immediate needs attended to, and found to be hyperthyroid.

A week later nobody had claimed him, yet this dear affectionate old boy must have been somebody's pet.

Our vets always try and rehome unclaimed pets, but the older ones are harder because they often have health issues. Their first idea of a

home for Albert with an elderly lady who had recently lost her cat, fell through when she herself fell ill. There was nothing for it but to see if the trio in the cat room would accept him. We needn't have worried - they went up to him straight away upon arrival and greeted him as if to say: "Where have you been? We've been waiting for you to join us". So join them Albert did, and he seems to enjoy all the home comforts - a warm cosy bed, good food and the company of other cats and people. He is on a daily tablet to keep the thyroid under control and he seems quite content and is doing well.

## **Toby**

Toby was bought as a mother's day present for friend Phyllis by her daughters after her last cat passed away. Phyllis had been campaigning for animals and the environment most of her life, and she particularly loved cats, especially the oriental type.



The daughters found Toby, a Tonkinese, on the Internet, and thought they were buying a 'lap cat' for their mother who was often confined to bed.

They met the breeder at a halfway meeting point, and Toby, wrapped in a blanket, was unceremoniously handed over and the money taken.

Well, the poor cat couldn't have been further from a lap cat! It seemed as if he had never been socialised and was terrified of people. Poor Toby, little more than a year old, spent most of his time at Phyllis' bungalow, hiding in the airing cupboard. Gradually he became less scared of Phyllis herself and would come on her bed when all was quiet and the carers had gone for the night.

Sadly, Phyllis, a longtime supporter of Catwork, died in August 2016. This left the dilemma of what to do with Toby, who was never going to be rehomeable. Barbara, knowing what we might be letting ourselves in for, offered to help by taking Toby for Phyllis' sake.

We fetched Toby from the next village where Phyllis had lived, and for the first few weeks we hardly saw him, as he would hide underneath the vetbed on the chalet shelf; his bed always ended up on the floor

where it had been knocked off while he struggled to get under the vetbed - all we could see was a mound in the middle!

Fortunately, Toby is a good eater but we knew we would have to be extremely patient and let time and routine work their magic before we could have any sort of relationship with him.

Toby was a big challenge, possibly one of the most traumatised cats we've had, and yet sold as a pedigree pet!

Well, Toby started to come round very, very slowly. He began to come out from under the vetbed, and stopped looking quite so terrified and lashing out, and began to relate to Bob more than Barbara - we wonder if the carers had been less than kind to him, so females were seen as a threat.

Bob started to spend more time with him when doing cat chores and saw that Toby really wanted to be friends but was just too scared.

Toby developed an infection some weeks after we took him and had to go to the hospital for tests. We thought that all the progress made would be undone upon his return, but not a bit of it; he seemed glad to be back on familiar territory.

The real breakthrough came when we let him mix with the other cats in the special needs area - he really likes the company and plays with the youngest, Bubbles, and now plays with toys.

Bob can now pick him up and give him a cuddle - Barbara hasn't dared to yet!

Reading up on Tonkinese, it would seem that these cats are very sociable animals, liking other cats and people. At last, six months later, Toby seems to be 'getting there' and is becoming more like the cat he's meant to be. Phyllis would be proud of him!



*Bubbles and Toby play and cuddle up together.*

## THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2016

### **Thomas Worcester** (FIV)

Thomas came to us in 2012, with the help of Jayne who was at that time a volunteer with Worcester Cats Protection, doing 'lost and found'.

Thomas had been found, weak and anaemic and tested positive for FIV, which put him in great danger of being put to sleep by this particular group. Thomas was in fact microchipped, and his owner, who didn't know where Thomas had gone, was keen, after he was found, to get him away to Catwork where he would be sure



of a life. Jayne, vet and owner all played their part to get Thomas released from the clutches of Cats Protection.

He came to Catwork and did very well after his anaemia had been treated. His one ongoing problem was a sore mouth which we finally managed to get under control by hitting on the right medicine for him.

Completely unexpectedly, we found Thomas dead in his bed on New Year's Day. He had shown no signs of being unwell, so it was a shock and a rotten start to the year in which we would lose quite a few more of our FIV friends.

Thomas was a great character - always the showman who liked to 'pick a pocket or two' when visitors came.



### **Thomas Cornwall (FIV)**

At the end of 2015 we had been given a cancer diagnosis for Thomas after extensive tests and ultrasounds. The vet thought he would be a good candidate for chemotherapy and arrangements were in place to do this.

However, it never came about as Thomas deteriorated quickly over a couple of days and Barbara found him dead one morning in early January, in the sick bay where we had put him.

Thomas Cornwall was the 'meet and greet' cat of the Fivery and somehow seemed to end up in most of the photos.

He had been with us since 2007. He had turned up at a farm in Cornwall and his rescuers and their vet were determined to find somewhere for this lovely, characterful cat to go. As he was FIV+, that place was Catwork, where we enjoyed his company for the next nine and a half years.

Thomas was well sponsored by his rescuers and the vet practice who asked us to take him, and he was hugely popular with all the visitors. He was a typical confident, no nonsense, friendly ginger cat, who is greatly missed.



### **Marmite (Lodger)**

Marmite was one of the three 'lodgers' we took in during the summer of 2015 to help their owner out, as she was being evicted and had not been able to find anywhere for the cats to go temporarily. Payments were made for their food and we were happy to help out until their owner was rehoused.

In the spring of 2016 the three

ladies were still with us and then Marmite suddenly fell ill. She stopped eating, which was very unusual for her. She was admitted to the hospital for tests which revealed an untreatable condition and Marmite deteriorated rapidly.

The owner did not respond to our frantic emails (the phone number was dead) and it was only after the vets, on welfare grounds, had put Marmite to sleep to prevent her suffering, that the owner finally contacted, not us, but the hospital.

Marmite's body was collected from the hospital by the owner, whom we never saw again!

The other two cats, Fidget and Bubbles, were abandoned - luckily for them, at Catwork.

### Chris (FIV)

Little Chris had been a long term stray in our village, who used to go through the cat flap of Christine's house (hence his name) looking for food. When Christine spotted he had a leg injury, she phoned us and we arranged that she would try and trap him and take him to our vet.

This happened and, unsurprisingly for an unneutered male stray, Chris was found to be FIV positive.



Chris came to Catwork where, although a little feisty at first, he blossomed into a chubby, affectionate little cat.

Chris developed eating difficulties in the spring of 2016, and when his mouth was investigated under anaesthetic, a lump was found at the back of his throat.

Chris was on palliative care for a while, but he grew thin and lethargic, and it became obvious the time had come to let him go. We were desperately sorry to lose him; he was not that old and had had a hard life until he came to us. We were only able to give little Chris two years of care.



### **Sam** (FIV)

Sam had come to us in 2011, all the way from Stoke-on-Trent, where he had been found as a stray in such a bad state that it was thought he wouldn't survive.

Shell, his rescuer, was determined he would make it despite his condition and being very traumatised. He was also FIV+.

Shell found our sanctuary and brought him down to us after a short time at her house to begin his rehab and gain his trust.

As time went by, he did grow to trust and began to act like the little cat he was always meant to be.

Ongoing diarrhoea problems towards the end of his life revealed he had picked up a strange bug found only in soil and he was on treatment for this from then on. He also suffered from a sore mouth but, despite this, he had a good appetite. Sam grew very thin, and despite all the medication, the chronic diarrhoea persisted.

Barbara found him almost dead in his bed one morning and took him over the road to the vet to quickly help his life to end.

Sam had been such a sweet cat who had suffered in his younger days, but had survived to spend some safe and, hopefully, happy years here with us.

### **Bertie** (FIV)

Bertie was found at the shop next door to our cottage, hiding under the veg racks one dark and stormy autumn night in 2008.

He was unneutered with no microchip so was taken off to the hospital to see if anyone claimed him, which they didn't.

Being FIV+ Bertie came to us and lived in the garden for the next eight years, enjoying extremely good health and being a very 'easy', affectionate cat, who was never any trouble.

During 2016, Bertie began losing weight and was being monitored, but nothing obvious showed up as he was eating and behaving normally. Then, in November, Bertie, over a few days, was finding eating more difficult and examination of his mouth revealed he had major tooth problems. Many teeth were removed and an abscess found under one of his canines - how on earth he didn't show us the discomfort he must have been in is amazing - cats are the most stoic of animals.



The cruel irony of fate was that at the same time as the dental was being done, Bertie started having blood in the faeces, never a good sign. He went back into the hospital as, having been discharged post dental, he wouldn't eat. Neither would he eat in hospital and he developed bad diarrhoea. We went to visit the poor little chap in hospital and were very distressed to see how scared he was. The vets tried all sorts to try to get him eating, and he did improve after being tube fed. However, that improvement was short lived. It was a roller-coaster of a week and it was beginning to look like we were dealing with intestinal cancer. Poor Bertie never made it - it was so sad that the much needed dental coincided with the cancer coming to a head. A week later, after all the work had been in vain, we went to the hospital to be with him when he was put to sleep. The dear little chap certainly recognised us this time and gave us head bumps and did his familiar 'paddy pawing' before quietly slipping away.

Barbara found Bertie's death - yet another of her favourites - very hard, it was so unexpected.

Bertie was one of the sweetest, gentlest cats you could ever meet.



## Jasper (FIV)

Jasper had been with us since 2006, when friend Mary, who works at RSPCA in Wales, got him signed over to herself as he was the only FIV+ in a multi cat household and would almost certainly have been put to sleep.

As it turned out, Jasper had a lucky escape and went on to enjoy a healthy 10 years with us at Catwork.

Jasper was very popular with the visitors and had a habit of wrapping himself round the neck to enjoy a cuddle, like a living scarf!

In 2015, Jasper had a stroke and we thought we had lost him at that point, but he made a remarkable recovery after a few weeks of medication and check-ups. His remarkable recovery made him the choice for last year's yearbook cover.

Towards the end of 2016, Jasper was starting to look his age (about 15) and developed a cold which went on a while, necessitating much 'steaming' to free up his airways.

Jasper was such a resilient cat that he overcame all the few health problems he had; the one thing he couldn't fight, however, was the dreaded cancer. Jasper had a cancerous growth at the back of his throat, which made eating difficult for him. However, he managed for some weeks on palliative care and carefully chosen food. He even greeted Christmas visitors, Jayne and Dorinda, by getting on to their shoulders when they went to see him in the sick bay; knowing they wouldn't see him again made it a very emotional visit.

In the week between Christmas and New Year, it was clear that Jasper had had enough and the tumour was getting the better of him. We took him just across the road to the vet, still on his warm heat pad, and he was gently put to sleep.

Another great FIV character, at a good age, gone to Rainbow Bridge.

## Mr Darcy

Last, but not least, our wonderful, characterful rabbit, Mr Darcy, also came to the end of his life in January 2016.

Darcy wasn't eating very well and, although reluctant for him to have a dental as he had shown himself not to be a good anaesthetic



candidate, it had to be done. All sorts of extra precautions were taken and the dental went well and so did his recovery. We decided to leave Darcy in the hospital an extra day to make sure he had made a full recovery and be given his medicines by the nursing staff. Completely unexpectedly, at the end of the second day, when all seemed to be going so well, we had a phone call from the vet with the shocking news that our dear rabbit had suddenly stopped breathing and couldn't be revived. An x-ray revealed he had a tumour in the chest. This was probably the reason he hadn't been eating too well, leading his teeth to become a problem, as rabbits have to keep eating to wear the teeth down.

We had noticed that Darcy had been a bit quiet and not so active, but put it down to his age - we estimate he must have been about eight - and was another of friend Mary's rescues from the RSPCA.

Darcy was such a character, a favourite at our vets and loved by visitors, the housecats and, of course, ourselves.

## UPDATE ON THE PRESENT CATWORK CATS



### THE FIVs

#### BT

BT is one of our older FIVs who was on the brink of being put to sleep at a Berkshire vets, where he had ended up over New Year 2007.

The phone call saying we would take him saved his life - hence his name. Ten years later and well into his teens, he is still with us.

During 2016 he had no health issues.



#### Ralph

Ralph is another oldie who came in 2009 from Redruth in Cornwall, with another cat, Thomas, no longer with us, when their owner couldn't cope with them as indoor cats.

Ralph is quite a character, having both a bent ear and wonky eye, but has a lovely, affectionate nature.

Ralph has a daily tablet as he is hyperthyroid, but had no other health issues in 2016.

## **Toby**

Toby was rescued in 2011, at a very young age, from a 'rescue' in Southampton, where he was on 'death row' because of being FIV!

A bit of a stropky teenager when he first came, Toby settled down into a nice-natured cat who has found his place in the gang. He had no health issues in 2016.



## **Trevor**

Trevor also came to us in 2011, and, again, from Southampton - this time from a veterinary practice where the staff were extremely fond of him (vet practices vary so much with regard to FIV, as do rescues).

After his ongoing mouth issues in 2015, we reached a treatment regime which has worked for him throughout 2016; there have been no issues with his mouth, or anything else.

Trevor is a friendly cat who likes people and food.



## **Harry**

Harry plays 'uncle' to the nervous or unwell cats. Although nervous of humans, he loves the company of other cats.

He came to us in 2010 from Bath Cats and Dogs Home with his brother (whom we lost to cancer in 2013). They were impossible



to home - in their case because of their nervous nature, rather than their FIV status.

A staff member and a volunteer found our website and asked if we would take them. After a long time they began to improve and, once up in the Fivery garden with the others, they did much better.

Not a candidate for handling and a hospital procedure, imagine our dismay when we noticed a growth on Harry's side, which had to be removed. He was taken off to the hospital with "Handle with extreme care" notices on his carry basket. We really felt for him!

On his return home, growth removed, poor Harry had to wear a bonnet to stop him licking the site. This meant keeping him in an area he couldn't escape from, or we wouldn't have caught him again.

Clever cat worked out a way to get the bonnet off and it was a two person job to get it back on again, only for Harry to get it off a second time, and we were only half way through his recovery time! Drastic action was called for, so Bob had an idea of making a harness out of tape, which went under Harry's front legs and attached to the cone - luckily, that worked!

Despite his nervous nature, Harry coped with the whole episode extremely well and we all breathed a sigh of relief when he was signed off and the bonnet removed.

Harry has become less worried by people over the years; even visitors can sometimes touch him, especially if there's a treat involved.



*Harry managed better than we expected with his bonnet.*



*Harry shares a cubbyhole with BT.*

## Mr Mog

Mr Mog is a characterful, pleasant cat from a rescue called 'The Moggery' where, had he remained there, would have been put to sleep - when are these so-called rescues ever going to learn about FIV?

He came to us in 2011 and has enjoyed extremely good health all that time. He enjoys hopping about in the Fivery and does his own thing; he is one who stays in the background when visitors come. The main thing is he's happy and healthy.



## Elvis

Elvis came from Wales in 2014. The rescue that was involved with him was in the throws of moving and not able to accommodate him at that time.

After he got used to his new surroundings, Elvis settled into life in the Fivery and learnt that he no longer had to throw his weight around to survive. He has grown into a really big cat and has been in excellent health so far.





## Barney

Barney is a 15 year old boy with a known history as he was constantly ending up in a vets in Cheshire with various injuries. It appeared that his owners let him wander around unneutered and getting into all sorts of scrapes.

On his microchip certificate, he was actually called Baby and, with his pale ginger and white colouring, he must have looked adorable. His 'baby' tendencies continue to this day as he loves to cuddle up and lick one's clothing.

Being an insecure cat at heart, it must have been hard for him out in the big world being attacked so often by other cats. On the last occasion, when he was handed in to the vets with a massive neck wound, he was deemed to have been abandoned, the owners not wanting to know. Poor Barney - his Catwork name due to all his scrapes!

Sponsor Roger was asked if he could help, which he did by asking if we would take him. We agreed, and Roger drove him all the way down from Cheshire in Summer 2015.

It took Barney a while to adjust as he seemed worried by the other cats, especially big black Eric, who was a recently neutered new boy here at the same time.

A year later, and everyone has adjusted to the communal life in the Fivery. Barney is a bit of a loner with a chalet to himself at night, but he loves people. He's been in good health since we took him; his neck wound cleared up in about a month and he had a much needed dental last summer. Hopefully, after such a rough life, this beautiful cat will enjoy the rest of it in peace.

## Eric

Eric came to us in the summer of 2015 from Wales where louts had been seen abusing him. He is a really big cat and, liking to throw his weight about, we kept him apart from the others for a long time, allowing him the freedom of the Fivery



garden during the evening and night when all the others were in their chalet areas till morning.

Only recently, now that Eric has fully found his place, has he started mixing with everyone else. This is all going well - showing off, hopefully, a thing of the past.

Being a big cat, you can imagine that Eric is very fond of his food. He has a large old-looking head which looks as if it doesn't belong to the rest of him, as his body is silky smooth. Looks don't matter of course; Eric badly needed help and we were able to give it.

## Georgie

Georgie is a pretty but nervous little girl, brought by friend Kath all the way from Skegness in 2014. She had been living on a caravan site and fed and given shelter by the manageress, with her brother, who was sadly run over.

When her FIV status was discovered, we were approached and asked if we would take her. It was perfect timing as we had, a few weeks earlier, taken in young Lenny who was a similar age. Both



cats are nervous and probably wouldn't have liked life in the Fivery

with the older, bigger boys, so this lovely little pair are in their own outside area with chalet.

Georgie remains shy and frightened of loud noises and strange people. She had a skin infection which necessitated a trip to the vet, which was as traumatic for us as it was for her.

Georgie and Lenny are lovely together and make a handsome pair.



## Lenny

Lenny was rescued from a Somerset vet in 2014, where he was in danger of being put to sleep because of being FIV+. He had been taken there as his owners had abandoned him when they moved, leaving this nervous little soul to fend for himself; in the process of doing this he became very thin and acquired FIV.

Lenny was extremely nervous when he first arrived and hid in the back of an igloo bed up in the sick bay. In time, like they all do, he came round and realised no harm was going to be done to him, and we were able to move him to an area near the house where he was soon to be joined by little Georgie.

Lenny had a skin problem, the same as Georgie, but something even more worrying in November, which took many tests and hospitalisation to diagnose; we thought we might lose him.

Lenny's problems started with a high temperature, followed by his whole body swelling up with fluid so he could hardly walk. It was most alarming and he was straight away hospitalised. He was so swollen up that the vet had great difficulty obtaining a blood sample for analysis. Lenny was kept in hospital for nearly a week while tests and ultrasounds were done.

Barbara missed him dreadfully and we went to visit him in hospital, which cheered him and us up. Being a nervous little cat, it must have been quite an ordeal for the little chap.

Eventually, we got the diagnosis of e-coli virus, which is very serious

and can even be fatal. To our huge relief Lenny pulled through but will be on long term medication due to the virus damaging his kidneys. At the time of writing, Lenny is back to his old self; he's eating well and looks quite chubby once more. Georgie too, for sure, is glad her companion is back to his old self.



## Baggy

Baggy, an old, blind cat, is no longer in the cat room on his own, but back in his own little chalet in the garden where he can, during the day, mix with all the other special needs cats in their garden area.

We had hoped he could join the house cats, but he was persecuting poor Marmaduke and Coco who became really scared of him. Out in the garden, the females keep him in his place!



During 2016, Baggy needed an operation on an old cyst under his eye, which was irritating him so much that it was bleeding due to his worrying at it. The lump was removed and stitched up, which meant the poor chap had to wear a cone until it had healed. He in fact coped with the encumbrance much better than we expected.

Baggy is still eating well and climbing around just like a sighted cat. He loves people, so its a shame that he behaved so badly in the house.

He is getting on well in his little house which is fitted with a heater as well as a heated pad in his bed - no danger of him being cold. He's an amazing cat who adapts well to changing circumstances. He came to us in 2012 when his owner moved and couldn't take him with her.



## Solo

Solo came to us in 2015, as it was thought she was leukaemia positive, having tested so on a first in-house test. She is the most beautiful, friendly cat, owned by a breeder who had a massive stroke and had to give up all her cats. Solo even won Best of Breed at the Supreme Cat Show in 2010 - quite a contrast to her life at

Catwork which she seems to enjoy, racing about and interacting with the moggies.

Solo, when retested three months after the first test, at an outside laboratory, was found not to have leukaemia virus after all. Everyone was surprised as she came with so many health issues which might well have been as a result of the virus - mouth ulcers and the most terrible diarrhoea. With much medication and many trips to the vet, all Solo's symptoms cleared up. As we know she did not have leukaemia virus she has been able to mix with the others.

All thoughts of homing her have been set aside as she would have to be an indoor cat, knowing nothing of roads and traffic, and most likely to be stolen! As Solo seems happy in the garden, we are leaving her where she is so we can keep her healthy and safe.



## Fidget

Fidget is one of the three lodgers we took in during the summer of 2015 on what we thought was going to be a temporary basis while their owner, who was being evicted, was rehoused. Fidget, in fact, did not belong to this lady but had been taken on as a stray.

At the beginning of 2016, we tried to find out what was going on with the housing situation as we hadn't heard.

Then things took a dramatic turn when Marmite, another of the lodgers, suddenly fell ill and died!

The owner collected Marmite from the hospital where she had been put to sleep, and abandoned the other two cats, Fidget and Bubbles, who are still here.

Poor Fidget, despite her large size, is a nervous cat and we feel she has been through enough upheaval without moving her on again. Her original owner was not able to be traced through her microchip details, so she is now registered to the Hunts and will be properly cared for.

## **Bubbles**

The baby of the group of lodgers, Bubbles, was a scrawny unspayed little thing when she arrived, but is now a spayed and chubby little cat who gets on well with all the others. She is doing a terrific job being a friend and playmate to Toby, Barbara's departed friend's cat, who was so terrified when he came. Bubbles and Toby chase each other around and bowl each other over; at other times they cuddle up together in the same bed. Bubbles has been a great help in Toby's rehabilitation.



## **Jason**

Jason, who had lived in Worcester cemetery for three years (first appearing at the funeral of a man named Jason) has been with us for well over a year, despite his renal problems. Barbara was visiting friend Jayne on a mini break in summer 2015 and accompanied her on the feeding visits to the cemetery, where she and other kind people were



feeding some strays - Jason, Millie and a terrified tabby. We realised Jason was drinking a lot, indicating possible renal issues, which turned out to be the case, so Barbara offered to have him at Catwork, where

he would be properly looked after and his kidney issues treated.

Jason had a big fan club in Worcester and has endeared himself to everyone here - he's such a friendly, happy soul and doing well.

At Christmas, Jason received his own special presents from Worcester - a new blanket, toys, treats and favourite fishy pouches.



It's good that we got hold of Jason as, not long after, the powers that be wanted rid of the cats as relatives of the dead complained about them! They were probably doing a good job catching vermin, but those who objected to having a bit of life in such a place got their way and the cats had to go.

What happened to Jason's cemetery companions? Read on...



## Millie

A very self-contained young lady had been in the cemetery for seven years as Jayne discovered when she found Millie was microchipped. Millie, apparently, had got in a delivery van in Monmouth at the age of one, and ended up in Worcester! Efforts to find her were unsuccessful, so imagine the

surprise when, now seven years old, she was found and traced. Sadly, the owners had moved (she was traced via the phone number) and now lived on a busy road - bad news for a cat that had lived in a cemetery with cars moving very slowly.

Millie was signed over to Jayne who kept her at her house while she searched for the right home for her. Eventually, the most wonderful forever home materialised with an owner who adores her.

Very sadly, not long after the perfect home came up, Millie developed a growth on the leg which was removed, but no one can be sure if all the cancerous tumour has gone. All seems well so far; let's hope it will continue and that Millie will have many years of being spoilt rotten after her seven years living rough in the cemetery.

### **Tabby aka Buster**

This terrified tabby had to be trapped - quite a nerve wracking business for poor Jayne. He was taken to the vet and sorted out, and 'scrubbed up' beautifully into a very handsome cat.



Buster has the run of the upstairs at Jayne's home in Worcester, keeping company with Oliver who is given a hard time by Jayne's downstairs cats if they meet up. Oliver and Buster have struck up quite a relationship, it seems. However, the same cannot be said for Buster and humans! As yet, he still eyes up Jayne warily, but is eating well and living in the lap of luxury after his years up in the cemetery in all winds and weathers.

So, all three cats have been redeployed and enjoying a real turn around in their fortunes.

### **Oscar (fostered)**

Oscar has always been fostered by Moira in Leicester, as, when he needed help, being in danger of being put to sleep because of FIV, we had no room to take him. Oscar had been found by the roadside in Dorset and taken to a vet hospital, but no injuries could be found. However, the fact that he was FIV+ made him a candidate for being put to sleep! The irony of it!



Oscar has done well with Moira, living with other rescue cats, some FIV+, others not. In 2016 he had a bout of flu, but made a good recovery, we hear.

## THE HOUSE CATS

### Marmaduke

Marmaduke is our oldest house cat and still very bright and active. The more attention he can get the more he's pleased, except when it's attention from the vet, which, thankfully, he seldom needs.

He was found in 2002 on our village bypass, scared, hungry and unable to walk due to an old leg injury, though he was only a tiny kitten.

Our vet was able to fix his leg which, to this day, dangles down when he is in a sitting position.

Marmaduke is one of the fussiest cats when it comes to food - he really prefers biscuits, but it has to be the right type, which varies from day to day! A cat of very conservative taste. However, he has the nicest of natures, and still performs his duty as the 'meet and greet' cat.



*As well as his 'meet and greet' duties, Marmaduke has also taken on the responsibility as chief bed tester - especially when we wash a bed and put it in the sun to dry, he feels he has to test it out!*



## Coco

Barbara brought Coco back from Eastbourne, after being up in London with a friend to launch our book on FIV cats, in 2011. He had been rescued by a lady who was terminally ill and desperate to find the extremely large (even as a youngster) and extremely frightened cat a forever



home. The timing for Coco was perfect, and we welcomed him into our home where he has grown to be quietly confident, although, when he hears strangers, he tends to run upstairs to hide under the bed until they've gone.

Coco has more 'pester-power' than a child in a sweet shop when it comes to asking for milk in the morning. Coco is a gentle giant, known as the black panther by one of our vets, and we are so glad we came along at the right time to help him.

## Polly

Polly was found in the village in 2006 as a stray. She's a little cat, easily spooked - when something scared her in the garden several years ago, she ran off. We finally got her back two weeks later after much searching, but decided she would be happier as an indoor cat. This suits her well;



she luxuriates on our bed on sunny days, and in front of a log fire on winter evenings. Polly vainly tries to control the two boys in the upstairs area who delight in teasing her from time to time. She is an affectionate lady and, with her five toes, very cute.



### **Oliver**

Found as a kitten in a country lane by the postman at Christmas 2007, Oliver is a plump little chap who enjoys good health. He also enjoys his food, which was the reason for his name in the first place - always wanting more!

Oliver loves his creature comforts and can always be found by a radiator in the winter. He's very much an upstairs cat; for some reason it's where he prefers to be. Just like Little Man,

he does tend to tease poor Polly from time to time.



### **Little Man**

This little chap, born with a twisted neck on a Worcestershire farm, came to us in 2012. His neck straightened up after our vet removed a large polyp from his ear, and he has blossomed into a nice looking adult.

'Littles' used to look very strange; his behaviour, however, still is strange - he is fascinated by shadows and lights, and often wanders around shouting very loudly, we've no idea why! Strange though he is, Littles is a very affectionate little cat.



### **Remembering Sasha**

FIV Sasha was adopted by friend Seppo from a rescue in Finland, or rather Seppo was adopted by Sasha. They had a very close bond and Sasha would accompany Seppo on walks.

Thinking Sasha might be lonely when he was at work, Seppo asked the rescue if he could adopt another cat as a companion for him. No FIVs were available, but a sweet little tabby female caught Seppo's eye. The shelter people

were sceptical - an FIV negative living with a positive? Seppo, knowing, because of his Catwork research, that the virus is only passed on through a fight, knew it would be fine as long as introductions were carefully made. Indeed, everything was fine, and little Siiri treated big Sasha like her son; they were the greatest of friends.

Sadly, in 2016, Sasha died from cancer. Seppo had spared no expense to treat his friend and Sasha had been given chemotherapy to buy him some time.

Sasha has left a big hole in both Seppo's and little Siiri's lives. But thank you Seppo for giving this wonderful FIV cat such a great life, and spreading the word in Finland about FIV.

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## WHO YOU KNOW

It's sometimes 'who you know' that can save a life - three such cases we were involved with during 2016:

### **Rosie**

Rosie was found to be positive for leukaemia virus, and the owner of the rescue/cattery she was in fell head over heels in love with this active, friendly little soul. She was determined to give her the best life possible, however short that might be, given she had FeLV, and set about trying to achieve this.

As it happened, one of our old FeLV contacts had, a few months earlier, asked if we knew of a FeLV cat to be a companion for her remaining FeLV Herbert, who was lonely having lost his companion. Rosie seemed the perfect answer.



Links were made, visits done, and Rosie went to live with Herbert who seemed very taken with her right from the start - they even look similar! Lets hope they have a great time together in their forever home.



## Charlie

Charlie's owner, Tracey, approached us, at her wits' end as to how best to deal with this lovely little chap - he had been born with some sort of deformity which meant he was often incontinent, and yet it didn't seem to bother him.

Charlie and his mum Poppy had come as a pair. Tracey had gone to rehome an adult cat and chose Poppy, but that meant her kitten would have been left on its own, so it was lucky for Charlie that she took them both, as Charlie's problems soon became apparent. The cats needed to be indoor cats because of the busy area, and the home was small, so Charlie was having to be confined to the kitchen where his 'accidents', which he couldn't help, could easily be cleaned up.

Charlie was taken to the vets many times but nobody was able to diagnose the problem. It looked as though he was going to have to be confined to the kitchen all the time, which wasn't going to be much of a life for him.

Barbara had a think, and one of her ideas paid off. She rang an old contact in Northumberland who runs a sanctuary/rehoming centre called Far Place and does amazing work with difficult animals. As it turned out Far Place was only an hour's drive from Charlie's owner.

Visits were made and, reluctantly, but knowing it was for the best, Tracey let Charlie go to Far Place where he would stay if his condition didn't improve, and have a normal life in the large tiled home. Jan of Far Place, incidentally, had come across this condition before and wasn't at all phased by it. Tracey can keep in touch with Charlie and go and see him, even have him back if his problem clears up, or circumstances change. A good result for all concerned!

## Primrose

Primrose, an elderly cat, was brought into our vets shortly before Christmas in a bad way and with blood coming from the eye.

Once treated, cleaned up and fed, she improved considerably. Nobody claimed



her and the staff were desperate to find her a home. We all felt that four geriatrics in our cat room was as much as could be managed, especially as two are on medication.

Barbara wondered how friend Claire, out at the Catwork outpost, was fixed, so gave her a call, because, in the past, several Catwork cats have gone to live with Claire. To Barbara's surprise, as she knew Claire had recently taken on strays from her own vet, she said "yes" to Primrose. Her cats, being on the young side were out a lot in the fields round her house and she said she would love an oldie who would be in the house more. Her words: "I knew there was a cat out there with my name on it". Everyone at the hospital was thrilled. Barbara and Bob took Primrose to her new home just before Christmas. Upon arrival in her own room, she demolished a pouch of food, with biscuits for afters. We can be sure that Primrose will be spending the rest of her days in the lap of luxury, thanks to Claire.

## Help for a cat in Portugal

Friend and supporter, Aysa, is involved with Bianca's Rescue in Portugal, which struggles against all odds to help injured and abandoned dogs and cats off the streets. One cat, Ritinha, she spotted on one of her visits, had, she was told, tested positive for feline leukaemia virus, so her chances of ever getting a home were poor.



Aysa asked us for our thoughts on this cat, knowing we have had many FeLV+ cats down the years, a few of which had been false positives. She asked the shelter to retest the cat and, to everyone's delight, the test came back negative.

Thanks to Aysa, this lovely cat's chances of getting a home have been greatly improved.

## THE LAST NOEL

Every year we find ourselves reporting on cats who have been put to sleep as they have fallen short of the homing criteria laid down by so many of the big rescue organisations, when an alternative to the death penalty has been available.

In 2016, it was Catwork who offered sanctuary to a sad little cat at the Blue Cross, but weren't allowed to take her; it seems the powers that be felt she was better off dead! This is her story:

Down in rural Devon, an elderly gentleman was feeding a little tortie cat and a black one outside, as strays. When the man died, not long before Christmas 2015, the black cat disappeared, and the tortie found another food source. The second feeder would have liked to adopt her, but her own tom cat wasn't having it, so she called in the rescuers.

Little tortie would normally have been taken to Axhayes Cats Protection, but they were shut due to a flu outbreak, so she ended up in the Blue Cross and given the name Noel - being so close to Christmas.

There were concerns about her being at Blue Cross because in the past they have often been known to put down FIV cats, which Noel was. However, there had been a change of policy and homes were being sought for FIVs as indoor only cats.

Realising that little Noel was never going to make a good pet, having lived outdoors and very nervous, her original rescuer asked us if we would take her into the sanctuary, to which we agreed.

Barbara spoke to the officials at Blue Cross indicating our willingness to help this little cat, but was told they were going to work with her to try and make her homeable, but would keep us in mind. After ten days of behaviourists assessing a traumatised cat confined in a cage, it was decided she was not suitable for homing and she was put to sleep!!

In answer to our emails to the Blue Cross Centre asking why we had not been given the chance to help her, we were told 'she hadn't liked other cats'.

We knew she had lived with one other cat without problem as a stray and, when she had to find a second food source, it was the other cat who didn't take to her.

Being FIV, she would have been in a separate pen at Blue Cross, not mixing with others, so how could they decide she didn't like other cats?

We were also told she was very aggressive in her cage - in our experience, scared cats show their fear in one of two ways - they hide away, or hiss and spit aggressively (natural fight or flight reaction) especially when trapped in a cage - so the behaviourists and manager decided to simply put her down, without even contacting Catwork to discuss the situation and see what we could offer her.

Certainly, we could have offered her a life that would have suited a scared cat who hadn't known a home, just like others we have helped in the past; she could have been given the space and time to come round in her time. If she truly had a dislike of other cats, she could have had her own space, but again, like others before her, any aggression to other cats disappears when given the chance to learn to trust and realise they are not a threat.

But no! This poor cat, who didn't conform to their usual homing standards, on the advice of so-called behaviourists, was simply got rid of - never to see another Christmas!

## WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST

In our yearbooks over past years, we have frequently mentioned the problems we have been trying to overcome regarding FIV cats. We had hoped by now that everyone would have a good understanding of the realities of the virus, and FIV cats would no longer be in danger just by testing positive for the virus.

Although things have improved in many ways, sadly, there are still far too many who seem to have learnt very little!

We had hoped that we would not still have to take in cats to save their lives, but you will see from the New Arrivals section (page 6) that our intention to wind down the numbers has been put off course by needing to take nine new cats into the sanctuary during 2016, all of whom would have been in grave danger if we had not accepted them.

### Bureaucracy

The old bureaucracy problems seem to be as strong as ever in many cases. We know of frequent occasions when individuals wanting to help an FIV cat, have been prevented from doing so by the rescue organisation concerned, simply due to outdated rules and regulations that have not changed with the growing understanding of the virus. An increasing amount of our work is in trying to help and advise others who want to take on an FIV, but who have problems with poorly informed rescue organisations, or poor vet attitudes.

We had our own confrontation in 2016 with a Blue Cross rescue in our area, over a little cat we'd offered to help, but who was put to sleep, in our view completely without justification. Barbara is still so sad and angry about the unnecessary death of little Noel (see her story on page 40).

### Prejudices

The ever present prejudices of those who believe FIV to be a 'terrible disease' still prevail in far too many rescues and veterinary practices; thankfully, not as many as when we started our FIV work 20 years ago, but there is still work to be done.

Sadly, for Catwork, and us personally, there are also factors that have worsened:

## Our age

Both of us are now well into the retirement phase of our life! The physical hard work of looking after 30 cats, especially when it's cold and wet, is beginning to take its toll; neither of us is as fit as we were!

The work can also be extremely draining emotionally, especially when we lose a cat, whether it's death is expected or not. All the cats are like an extended family to us.

## Finances

Finances are becoming increasingly stretched. Many of our cats are now old. Some need daily medications and special diets and, generally, the older cats tend to need more veterinary attention.

The situation has not been helped by those who have asked us to take in a cat with a promise of sponsorship, which then never materialised once the cat was here.

Our two lodgers, Fidget and Bubbles, have now been abandoned here at the sanctuary - we do feel they both need to stay here for their own reasons, so don't feel able to rehome them.

We have lost some supporters because of their own financial circumstances and, sadly, some have died.

For the first time ever we received legacies, two this year, but one was fully used on a single month's vet bill, and the other turned out to have no funds to pass on to us.

## Future

For the future, we will continue to focus on education about the virus through the website, phone and email contacts and our '80 FIV cats' booklet, as well as the 1000 FIV cats database ([www.fivcats.org](http://www.fivcats.org)) to which we will keep adding and updating the information given to us by owners of FIV cats across the world. We hope that the database will prove a valuable resource for those who need or want to know the real facts about FIV.

All in all, things are getting tougher, and after 22 years of Catworking we are feeling the strain. We still have 30 cats in our care, only 4 of which are our personal pets. But we are aware that most of you who are reading this are the very people who are willing to help us, and are continuing your support, so a huge 'thank you' to all of you for enabling us to keep on helping the cats, despite the difficulties.

## 20 YEARS OF WORKING FOR FIVS

Before 1997 we had never heard of FIV. Up until the arrival of Harry (our first FIV cat) we had engaged in rescuing and finding homes for cats in our locality in a very small way, as we had few facilities. Even so, when recently we found our records, we saw to our amazement that in the pre-FIV years 1995-1997 we had homed over 100 cats. Harry's arrival was to change our lives for ever and he was our first teacher that FIV was nothing to be scared about. Harry's biggest problem was, in fact, his sheer terror of humans.

Harry and his elderly blind companion - probably his dad - had been fed by a lady in a rural area near us, but she was going home to Canada and was worried what would happen to them. Sharing the same vet, and knowing we did a bit of rescue work, she asked for our help.

We took on blind Bobby for the rest of his days, and Harry, who had to be trapped, was destined to go and join a feral colony at a local rescue centre. However, at the vets for neutering, he was discovered to be FIV+. The nurse turned up at our door with Harry in basket, explaining he couldn't go to the rescue centre because of being FIV+. We blankly asked: "What is that?"

Well, over the next 20 years, Harry and many, many FIV cats taught us about FIV, which is nothing like it has been made out to be.

Some vets are still woefully ignorant about the virus; many 'learnt' about it from text books listing flawed experiments done back in the 80s and 90s, where lab cats were injected with a massive dose of the virus and, unsurprisingly, didn't do too well!

In reality, the FIV virus develops slowly and appears to have little effect on the cat's health. Any health issues respond to treatment the same as with a non-FIV cat.

As with people, some cats get more health problems than others, but FIV seems to play little or no part in this.

Some of our FIV cats have overcome major surgery, even a stroke, as well as more routine ailments, and many live well into their teens despite being FIV from a young age.

The whole debate about FIV rages on, which, in our view, is one big storm in a teacup.

Sadly, some rescues and owners are influenced by their vets who promulgate wrong information, and many cats are still losing their lives because of FIV.

However, progress has been made in the last 20 years. Some vets are becoming more enlightened, rescues and people are doing their own research, many of whom find our comprehensive website and we receive emails on a very regular basis for our thoughts on an FIV cat problem.

We put together a booklet in 2011, entitled "80 FIV cats and what they have taught us about the virus"; it has gone worldwide (in electronic form overseas) and has been widely dispersed across this country.

Our other project, begun in Dec 2014, known as the '1,000 FIV cats' project, is a website-based database of FIV cats where the owner completes a questionnaire about their cat's details, background, health history and vet's attitude etc. We have well over 700 cats on the database, which can be viewed by visiting [www.fivcats.org](http://www.fivcats.org). All the owners are of the same opinion that FIV is not the 'terrible disease' it's been said to be - we can't all be wrong!

### **From Harry to Harry...**

Our first ever FIV cat was Harry in 1997, and this year's front cover is Harry too.



*Harry, our first FIV cat, 1997*



*Harry, our present FIV cat, 2017*