



THE CATWORK YEAR

**2019**

## Front cover

Our front cover cats this year are two of our FIV cats, **Toby** (ginger and white) and **Trevor** (black and white) who have been with us since 2011. Both cats, by coincidence, came from Southampton.

Toby came from a rescue that thought FIV was a terrible disease, and any cat testing positive should be put to sleep; this was to have been Toby's fate, but we heard about him just in time.

Trevor, on the other hand, came from a FIV-friendly vet practice where the vets grew very fond of him and determined to find him a place to go.

These two cats typify the conflicting attitudes towards FIV at the time; a conflict which still persists today, but to a much lesser degree.

Toby was a mere youngster of about 18 months, when he came to Catwork, and Trevor about three to four years old. Both have enjoyed good health, their main issues being dental problems (like most cats at some point in their lives).

Their FIV status has not prevented them from having healthy and, hopefully, happy lives.



## The Catwork Year 2019

2019 saw the usual mix of caring for the cats in the sanctuary, receiving visits from friends and supporters, and offering advice and support via email and phone calls to worried owners of FIV cats who contact us on a regular basis, having seen our website.

The year had its ups and downs, starting with a high, as those who saw last year's book will remember, with the return, in January, of long lost Mikey.

Spring was difficult, with two cats, Louie and Johnny, both in intensive care, literally fighting for their lives. Amazingly, for us and them, they both pulled through and have made full recoveries.

Summer saw us losing several of our residents in quick succession, the causes varying from old age problems to leukaemia virus to kidney failure. All in all, a sad summer!

Autumn and winter brought a quieter time in the Fivery, but the house cats had various health issues. Bob got back to some DIY in the cottage and, by Christmas, had created a library corner, which soon filled up with books (mostly mine) on, guess what, poetry and many, many books on cats!

This yearbook will, we hope, paint a picture of our work caring for special needs cats, and also give an idea of some of the problems such cats can encounter when they need to be rehomed.

Read on through the yearbook to find out how we and the cats fared during 2019.

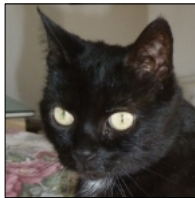
## JANUARY



### Rocky

Rocky is not doing so well, losing weight and his skin issues still bad, despite the medication.

We have more investigations done, and his blood results show that he needs vitamin B12, which we proceed to give him in capsule form.



### Polly

Polly gets her annual sniffles, which clear up with medication.



### Oliver

Ollie seems to have sniffles too, just like Polly, which also soon clear up when treated.



### Mikey

The end of January brings us a big surprise in the shape of Mikey, a cat I had homed ten years ago! Mikey sadly went missing soon after we delivered him to his new home in Radstock, near Bath. Despite posters, leaflets and trips to Bath (quite some distance from us) all attempts to find him proved of no avail. We were devastated - Mikey was a stray with no special needs, just needing a home, and I felt I'd found him one with somebody I knew.

Mikey must have adopted somebody in the area, but we never knew. Then one day, at the end of January, we get a call from a Bath vet saying that a cat in quite a bad way had been brought in overnight, found by a couple in their shed, and his microchip traced him to Catwork!

I am over the moon, always having had a feeling that I might see him again.

We drive to Bath the next day in spite of the vet saying he was in a bad way - what could have happened to him lately? We'll never know.

On seeing Mikey, we recognise what a resilient chap he is, and bright; he isn't about to give up, and neither are we.

We take him straight back to the vet hospital in Bridgwater, having booked an evening appointment before we left.

Vet Sarah, aware that preliminary bloodwork had been done, knew that, despite his outward appearance, his major organs were in good shape. She operates on Mikey the next day, needing to drain a very bad abscess, remove polyps from both ears and sort out a dental. Mikey is, of course, a bit thin and anaemic.

He's back home the very next day and installed in the oldies' room. Mikey is content to just eat and sleep, bless him! He soon puts on weight and his blood count comes up to normal. What a joy to get him back again after all that time and provide him with a safe retirement home!



*Mikey (left) enjoying being with friends Georgie and Hattie ... and fresh air with sunshine (when available)*

## FEBRUARY



### Justin

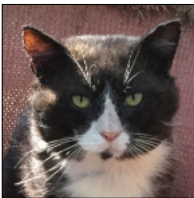
I begin to get concerned about our only leukaemia cat as he is losing weight. He is approaching the age (around 5) when the virus seems often to 'kick in'. We've had him three years and he was probably 2 or 3 when he was diagnosed, which puts him at that critical age.

We have his weight monitored on a regular basis. Justin is still very bright; a dear little chap, and I resolve to treasure every day he's with us. Every day for a cat with the leukaemia virus is a bonus.



### Mikey

Mikey, poor chap, needs his abscess draining again; it really was a brute of an abscess! After all he's been through he's still so tolerant and responsive; let's hope this is the last time.



### Rocky

Rocky has been steadily going downhill. As an older long term stray with multiple issues when we took him on, he's done well to cope as well as he has, and he is such a bright cheeky little chap.

One night in the middle of February, he puts himself to bed on a full stomach, and Bob finds him next morning clearly coming to the end of his life. We carry him across the road, still in his cosy bed, where vet Dominic eases him over the final dying process. We are so very sad; such a little fighting spirit and such a character; he had certainly been 'round the block' a few times and had a hard time during his strydom. We are going to miss him greatly.

Rocky came, via our CLAWS friends, in 2017 arriving, all the way from Berkshire, in a taxi driven by a friend of Beverley, who founded CLAWS rescue.

He was in quite a state, found in a trap set to catch a different cat. Rocky was neutered after he came to us as he was still poorly and on antibiotics on arrival.

The characterful little chap improved dramatically and, for a whole year, really seemed to enjoy life in the Fivery. In 2018 Rocky had a major dental and was plagued by really bad skin problems. He seemed to deteriorate towards the end of that year; various blood tests were done, but were never really conclusive as to what might be going on.



*Rocky doing well and enjoying the garden*



*Rocky clearly losing weight, but still alert*

Throughout all this, Rocky remained a lively, happy little cat, dashing about the garden.

In February 2019 Rocky had his supper as usual and put himself to bed in a cosy 'kennel' shaped bed, where Bob found him, clearly dying, next morning. We took him, still in the bed, to the vet across the road where he was put to sleep.

Rocky was a delight - a little cat with a big personality, and much missed.

I pick up a nasty vomiting virus, which is very persistent and puts me out of action for most of the month! Poor Bob takes on even more tasks, and has to look after me as well as the cats. I am not able to eat or do much at all - we struggle through.

## MARCH



### Justin

Blood tests reveal that Justin is very anaemic, a classic leukaemia symptom. To help him he has regular B12 injections. Now that anaemia has set in, there is no knowing how long he has, poor little chap, but, for the moment, he is still bright and active.



### Lenny

Lenny has his six monthly check-up at the hospital to evaluate his kidney function, which has been impaired by the e-coli infection he contracted. The results are not too bad, but a heart tablet is added to the cocktail of medicines he's already on.



### Mikey

To our dismay, we notice that Mikey's face is swollen, yet again, on the side where he had the deep abscess and, yet again, it has to be drained. What a blessing his major organs are in good shape to cope with the anaesthetics he's had to have since he came back to us.

Friend Sara pops down from Bristol for the day to catch up with all the cats, especially Miss Puss, who had 'adopted' her mum, but who came to live at Catwork when her mum became poorly.

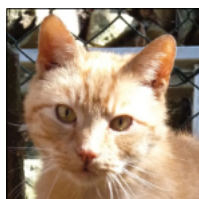


A surprise garden visitor - a sparrowhawk lands on the small tree in the first part of the garden! Luckily, Bob has his camera nearby.



Son Ted, with Anna and little Freddie, come down from Windsor to take us out for a pub lunch as a Mother's Day treat. It is hard to believe that my grandson, Freddie, is almost a year old already!

## A P R I L



### **Eddie**

Eddie's skin is very bad; the supplement for skin issues we've been putting on his food no longer seems to be helping. After a vet consultation, Eddie is put on steroids to see if they will help.



## Jason

Jason, always a picky eater, is now not eating much at all. The vet takes him back to the hospital to put him on a drip in an attempt to perk him up a bit.

Blood tests show that his kidneys are now failing. Jason came to us with a poor prognosis for kidney function, so I suppose we must be grateful that, against the odds, we've had almost four years of his characterful company.

We have no choice, given his blood results, but to have him put to sleep. We go to the hospital to be with him as he quietly slips away.

Jason was a sweet, friendly, little cat who came from, of all places, a cemetery in Worcester where he had lived, along with other strays, for three years. Friend Jayne, along with other cat lovers, used to feed the little group. When I went to spend a few days with Jayne, I straightway fell in love with Jason who, as soon as Jayne's car was heard, came running out to meet us.

It was apparent that Jason was drinking a lot, and we suspected renal problems, which subsequently proved to be right.

I offered to have Jason at Catwork where he could be monitored and live life in comfort. Jayne brought him down shortly after his diagnosis, in 2015.



*Jason jumps into Jayne's car to see what's for supper, whilst still in the cemetery*

In time, Jayne sorted out the other strays: she found a lovely home for Millie who, according to her microchip, belonged to a family in Monmouth, who had lost her seven years previously when she got into a delivery van! Sadly, they couldn't take her back, but allowed Jayne to rehome her. The other cat, who was terrified and

almost feral, Jayne trapped and took on herself. Barney, as Jayne called him, gradually became less terrified. It was so sad that his kidneys failed not long after he became less frightened. At least he knew some

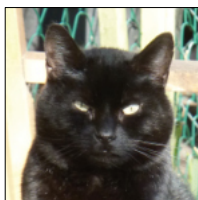
love and comfort after living rough in the cemetery.

Despite a poor prognosis, Jason spent nearly four years at Catwork, enjoying the garden and visitors. Every Christmas, Janice, one of his Worcester fans, would send him a special goody bag with a new blanket, toys, special food and treats.

Jason's kidneys finally failed over Easter 2019. He became lethargic and not wanting to eat. Miss Puss was a special mate of his and he spent his last night in her chalet.



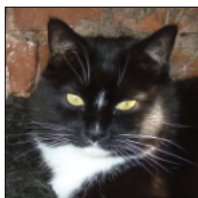
Despite vitamin shots and time spent on a drip, we had to admit defeat and have him put to sleep. He was a darling, bright, bouncy little guy and it was a privilege to have given him a home at Catwork.



### **Justin**

Although now very anaemic, Justin is doing quite well at present on his regime of vitamin injections at three weekly intervals. He is eating quite well, for him, and still quite bright. Hopefully, we can buy him a good amount of time before the

leukaemia virus overwhelms him.



### **Lenny**

Lenny goes off to the hospital for blood pressure monitoring to see if the new heart tablets he is taking are helping, and results show that they are.

Lenny is now on a whole cocktail of medicines at various times of the day. He's such a sweetheart and certainly worth all the effort.



## **Louie**

Easter Sunday morning, we find Louie in some distress, hardly able to breathe!

It's straight to the hospital as an emergency; vet Heidi puts him into an oxygen tent straight away. It's all very worrying!

Louie remains in the hospital and is given a range of medications to try and get him through the crisis; it is very much 'touch and go' and so unexpectedly out of the blue.

As he will not eat, there is talk of putting in a feeding tube, which we are not sure about. Fortunately, this proves unnecessary thanks to some creative thinking on the part of vet Louise, who adds in another drug to the mix, which seems to make the difference. After four worrying days of intensive hospital care, Louie pulls through. To our great relief, we get him back, against the odds it would seem, to continue his medication in the Fivery. Six days later, at the end of the month, he is signed off with a clean bill of health - Phew!



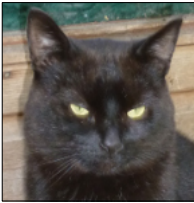
## **Marmaduke**

Having been diagnosed with the beginnings of kidney disease last year, Marmaduke has some blood tests to see how he's doing now.

It seems, thank goodness, that he is doing quite well, with little change to the results! (Must be the eel serum I give him as he certainly won't eat the renal diet, or much else for that matter!)

## MAY

Friends, Laura and Sam, come over for the afternoon and enjoy meeting up with everyone. The cats enjoy meeting them as they come bearing treats.



### Johnny

We have to take Johnny to the hospital one Saturday afternoon when I notice that he is in obvious pain when trying to pass urine. This is very serious for a male cat and can be fatal if not treated urgently.

Vet Michael diagnoses an infection, so we are pleased that it is not stones causing a blockage.

We get Johnny home and start giving him his course of antibiotics for the infection, but a couple of days later, to our dismay, he seems to be having just as much trouble trying to urinate. Over the road at the vets, Sarah says he must immediately go to the hospital as his bladder is almost fit to burst! So Bob rushes him into Bridgwater. It would seem that Johnny has gone into muscle spasm which is causing the painful problem and it is a life-threatening situation.

We spend a worrying week with Johnny in intensive care. He keeps pulling the catheter out, making his treatment difficult.

Just when Johnny seems to be stabilising and things going in the right direction, he pulls his catheter out yet again. This time vet Sarah says she is not sure if it can be reinserted, as damage is being done each time it is. We urge her over the phone to give it a go; he is such a young cat - too young to die! Sarah leaves us in no doubt that if Johnny pulls the catheter out one more time, it will be 'game over'.

She modifies the tubing, making it more difficult for him to pull out, and adds in even more medication.

At home, we are on tenterhooks each time the phone rings - hoping for the best, but fearing the worst.

Sarah's efforts appear to be paying off, and next day we go to visit Johnny in the hospital. The poor chap seems pleased to see us and desperate to get out of the pen, but there's a way to go yet before we can know if he is going to be alright.

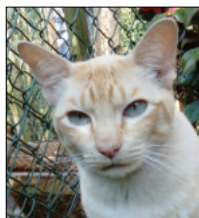
As Johnny is the only in-patient over the Bank Holiday, he is getting, we're told, lots of attention and cuddles from the nurses!

To our immense relief we bring Johnny home, a week on from when he was admitted, with the biggest cocktail of drugs you can imagine - to be given morning and evening.

We work out a way of administering his medication, with me sitting in the chair in Johnny's area with him on my lap, and Bob popping a whole series of the necessary tablets into his mouth. Johnny is remarkably tolerant of this and seems to be happy having his special area all to himself, where he can recover without the stress of the other cats around him.

We watch him in trepidation every time he attempts to pass water - the early days are critical for him managing on his own. I find it extremely nerve-wracking!

Time passes and Johnny seems to be coping. We come to the end of his medication and he is assessed by the vet, and all the hard work seems to have paid off and the painful muscle spasms a thing of the past. As a precaution, he is put on a daily capsule to aid urinary function. What an enormous relief - both for him, and us!



### **Toby**

Toby is off colour and being sick; he needs to be examined of course, but catching him is one big problem, as he is like a feral when approached!

Bob attempts several times to catch Toby without success; we realise it has to be a two person job.

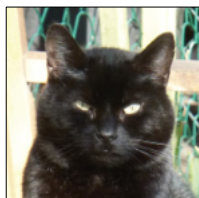
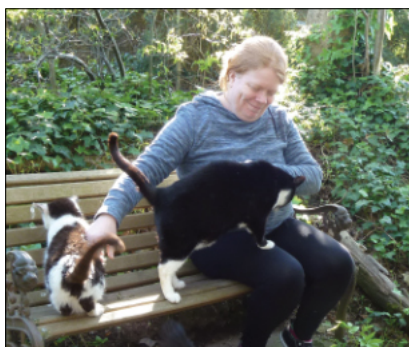
My role is to 'brush' Toby out from his hiding place from the path outside into the open area of the pen where Bob is at the ready to

'pounce'. After a couple of goes, he manages to get Toby into the basket. What a performance!

We take Toby over the road, and warn vet Abigail that we can't let him out of the basket for examination, or we'll never get hold of him again!

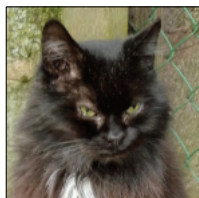
Toby is taken back to the hospital to be examined under a light sedative. He has blood tests done and the necessary treatment, and Bob is able to fetch him home the same afternoon.

Meanwhile, I've been having a lovely day with friend and supporter, Helen, who is down for the day, having arrived bearing gifts for us and the cats. We take a walk round the village and climb up the Mount, where a castle used to be in Saxon times, affording great views over the surrounding area.



### **Justin**

Justin continues to be weighed each month and have his B12 injections - so far, so good, bless him!



### **Shadow**

The little chap seems very hungry (unusual for him) yet not putting on weight - classic hyperthyroid symptoms. He goes off for tests, and our suspicions are confirmed. He has to have a daily tablet to control the problem.

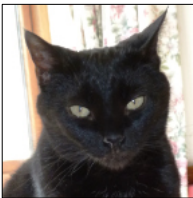
We are told he badly needs a dental, so that will need to be done before too long.

On my birthday we do our usual trip to the garden centre to buy summer bedding, and have a pub lunch - for us, that's living it up!



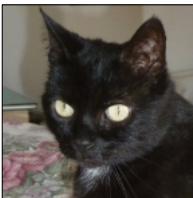
Sara, Lorna and Lyn, our Bristol friends, come to visit and take me out to lunch in honour of my birthday. We spend the afternoon with the cats in the garden.

During the afternoon my granddaughter, Romilly, drops in and meets the girls and cats.



### **Oliver**

Ollie has a repeat of his winter sniffles and is put back on tablets which sorts the problem out.



### **Polly**

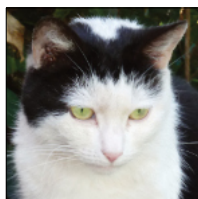
Polly too has a repeat of the sniffles and is put back on the medication.

Stan and Dot, two of our longstanding sponsors, pay us a spring visit and spend time with the cats.



## JUNE

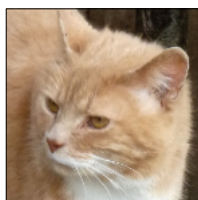
At this time of the year, some of the cats in the garden area near the house (Georgie, Jemma, Justin and Bubbles) get patches of hair loss around the head and neck. This has happened to several of them for the past few years. We are beginning to think it could be a reaction to a shrub - the mock orange - which comes into flower at this time.



### **Bubbles**

Bubbles seems to be particularly badly affected with fur loss on the neck this year, so the vet gives her a jab to calm things down, and eventually the fur grows back.

Once the shrub has finished flowering, Bob does some drastic pruning. We'll have to see if, next year, there is any difference.



### **Herbert**

Herbie has blood tests to try, yet again, to get to the bottom of his ongoing diarrhoea problem.



## Justin

Despite all our efforts to help Justin with his anaemia, the virus finally wins, as we knew it inevitably would, sooner or later. The little chap becomes very lethargic and not wanting to eat, so we know the time has come to call it a day. Our vet is surprised he's done so well for so long since diagnosis. These leukaemia virus cases are always so sad, as the virus claims them at such a young age; often, we have noticed, around the age of five or six, which is the age we estimate Justin to be.

Justin, together with his sister, Jemma, were found in a box left outside a supermarket in Weston-super-Mare, in May 2016.

On being taken to the vet, they were blood tested and Justin tested positive for leukaemia virus (FeLV) while Jemma did not.

A vet nurse, who lives in our village, happened to be on duty when they were brought in and, realising Justin would probably be put to sleep because of the leukaemia virus, came and asked if we would take him. We agreed, calling him Justin, because of rescuing him from this fate, 'just in time'.

We ended up taking Jemma as well, as no rescue could take her at that time. As the cats had lived together, there seemed little point in splitting them up now. Jemma probably had immunity to the virus, and we would only know the true status of the pair when retesting them three months on from the first test.

The cats were so alike that, at first, we couldn't tell them apart, so the vets put paper collars on them so we knew which was which!

Justin also needed emergency dental treatment, as one tooth was splitting his gum. Jemma too had a dental.

The pair had their own chalet and did a 'time share' with the other cats, sharing the garden area for a different part of the day.

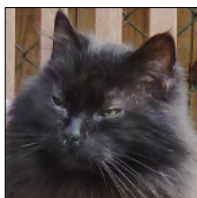
As their characters showed through we found them to be sweet, affectionate little cats, Jemma seeming to favour Bob, while Justin seemed to favour me.

The pair did well for a couple of years, then, in the spring of 2019, we noticed that Justin was losing weight and began to fear that the

dreaded FeLV virus was 'kicking in' as it seems to do around the age Justin probably was - approx five or six.

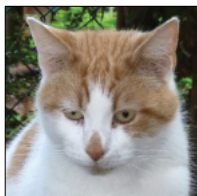
Blood tests showed Justin to be anaemic and he began to get vitamin injections every three weeks, which kept him going for quite some time, so the little chap was able to enjoy some of the summer.

When Justin started to become disinterested in being out in the garden, and was not eating much, we knew it was time to say goodbye. Leukaemia virus is so cruel claiming the lives of young cats as it does. Justin was, however, luckier than many who get put to sleep after the first positive test, as we were able to give him three years he would not otherwise have had, and which he seemed to enjoy. We still have Jemma.



### **Louie**

Louie appears to be a bit snuffly again, so we react immediately and get him on a course of antibiotics before it develops into something more serious like it did back in April when he had pneumonia and was very ill.



### **Toby**

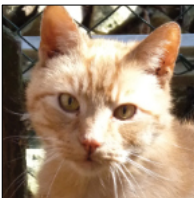
Toby has a bald patch, which responds relatively quickly to a steroid injection.

## JULY

I spend a lovely afternoon visiting Vera, a friend of longstanding, who used to do cat rescue. It seems she can't kick the habit as she's taken in a lovely stray she calls Kim, whom I meet for the first time. Dolly the dog gives me a warm welcome too.



Another visit from Bristol friends, this time Annie makes it with Lyn and Sara.



### Eddie

Eddie alarms us all one Saturday in July, when our Bristol friends are down visiting for the day, by looking proper poorly, sitting drooling in a chair while everyone else is pigging out on treats. He has shown no sign of anything being wrong, except for the skin problem he's always had; he even ate most of his breakfast that day.

There is clearly something seriously amiss with the poor old chap, and Bob takes him straight off to the hospital for an emergency appointment to investigate his issues, while I stay with our friends who are enjoying visiting the cats.

At the hospital, duty vet Michael suspects a foreign body up the nose and plans to operate next morning. This he does, but can find nothing, and Eddie seems very poorly and not wanting to eat, which is very unlike him.

Another possible reason for the excessive drooling could be teeth, so poor Eddie undergoes another anaesthetic and has some really awful teeth removed. Sadly, this procedure makes no difference either, and Eddie keeps filling up with mucous, which is affecting his breathing.

The nurses keep him comfortable with a nebuliser and heavy duty pain relief, and he's being fed through a tube, the poor thing. If only the vets could come up with a diagnosis!

Swabs were taken when Eddie had his dental for lab tests - perhaps they will reveal what is wrong with Eddie.

Bob and I go to visit Eddie in the hospital; he is very quiet and unresponsive, understandably.

One week after being admitted to hospital we seem to be getting nowhere with poor Eddie, and we take the decision to let him go, although the test results are still not back at the hospital. Eddie seems completely 'out of it', so we know we are doing the right thing, especially when Eddie looks at us for the first time during our hospital visits, seeming to give us 'permission'. It has been all very sad for Eddie; everyone has tried so hard to save him, but he's responded to nothing, and seems unlikely to.

Eddie is quietly put to sleep and we take him home to bury him in the garden. We are too late to stop the lab tests; they are already being processed. The results will be intriguing, if now somewhat academic.

When we do get the results the following week, we are all amazed; both the vet and us. Eddie, it seems, has been suffering from no less than two different viruses: herpes virus, calicivirus and a powerful bacterial infection! No wonder the poor old chap was unable to overcome such an overload. The surprising thing is that Eddie gave us no clue how ill he was until the final stage - cats are so resilient, they hide their problems so well.

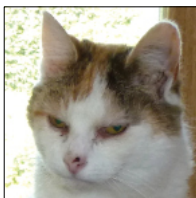
Eddie would seem to have been a long term stray, but at least for the last 18 months of his life, he knew some care and comfort.

Eddie came to us in March 2018 from a vet in Essex. The picture we saw of him made us think he was a candidate for the oldies' room, as he looked elderly and pathetic.

When he finally arrived, after a delay because of the snow, we joked that nurse Steph had brought the wrong cat, as Eddie was large and energetic! He looked as if he had had a hard life and his skin was in a really bad state. Although we were able to help the skin condition a bit with a supplement to promote skin health, it did always remain an issue for him.

Eddie quickly investigated the Fivery garden and, being a very confident chap, soon got into the routine and would 'eat for England'.

Eddie seemed to enjoy his short time with us and gave us no clue that, it would appear, his poor old body was being overwhelmed by three different infections. Even on the day he was hospitalised, Eddie ate some breakfast. A whole week later, with extensive tests and intensive care, Eddie lost the battle. We like to think he enjoyed the last little bit of his life; he certainly seemed to - what a strong character!



### **Hattie**

Hattie has an eye infection and is prescribed drops to be put in twice a day. As she is such a wriggly girl, it's a two person job, morning and evening.



### **Puss**

Lovely Puss has her booster vaccination over the road and, as always, is much admired.



### **Herbert**

The results of Herbie's blood tests show that he has B12 deficiency, so is prescribed capsules to be sprinkled on his food alongside his other medications; though nothing much seems to alleviate the diarrhoea problem. We have even added in slippery elm, a well known herbal remedy, in the hope that it will help.



### **Shadow**

Now that Shadow's hyperthyroidism is under control, he can have his dental. Who would have believed that the once petrified Shadow would cope with going off to the hospital and having an operation? I'm so proud of the little chap; he's come such a long way since we took him on.

Shadow goes into hospital the night before his dental and is put on fluids, which will help his body cope with the procedure. He has his much needed dental and also stays in hospital the next night to ensure he's fine before coming home.

My son Ted, Anna and grandson Freddie, come down from Windsor for a visit, and Freddie meets lots of cats; he seems to like them!





Once again, we seem to have had some success with our 'pottering' in the garden - can't call it gardening, just a few pots! They brighten up the view from the kitchen.

## AUGUST

### Mikey



Mikey, unexpectedly, takes a sudden turn for the worse, not wanting to eat and looking very poorly. He goes off to hospital where he remains for several days, having blood tests and swabs taken to try to get to the bottom of the problem.

The vet is quite concerned about him, as, of course, are we. Then, as quickly as Mikey had gone downhill, he makes as sudden a recovery, taking us all by surprise. The lab test comes back showing herpes virus - a flu like virus that recurs from time to time with stress; though what stress Mikey had been feeling in the comfort and safety of the cat room, goodness only knows!

We get him back home where, thankfully, he seems his usual bright self, just as though nothing had happened.



## Lenny

Lenny seems to be losing weight; he's always been such a chubby little chap that it takes a while for any weight loss to become noticeable. He's still his usual bright, cheeky self and having his many medications every day, which help his kidneys, damaged by the e-coli infection he contracted.

He has been doing so well, and his last set of tests at the hospital in the spring had been reasonably good.

All the same, we decide to get him checked out and he is taken back to the hospital, where blood tests reveal that he is in renal failure! I can hardly believe it; how could it not have been obvious? The vet tells us he should be put to sleep as he has only a matter of days left! In total shock and disbelief, we go to the hospital for the euthanasia but, when he is brought out to us, he still seems so bright and alert that we can't go through with it then and there, even though we now know that his days are numbered. The vet doesn't have a problem with us taking Lenny home for the weekend, as he is not in pain, but says that Monday needs to be the day to say goodbye.

The weekend is bittersweet, spending lots of time with Lenny, tempting him with different things, which he doesn't want but, to my delight, he accepts a little cooked chicken and a drop of milk.

I can't believe that we will no longer see Lenny running along the wall in his area and over the chalet roof to see what we have for him.

I think back and remember a short while ago, Lenny had 'detained' me one evening - nuzzling up and wanting fusses. At the time he seemed to be trying to communicate something, and I wonder if, in his own unique way, he was saying goodbye.

We have Lenny put to sleep just over the road on the Monday morning, as arranged; Lenny quietly slips away very peacefully. This euthanasia is for me one of the saddest I have been through - perhaps because Lenny is still so young and, but for the e-coli, could have been with us for many years. Also, the intensive care he needed meant I spent a great deal of time with him. Lenny and his little friend, Georgie, lived near the house so were the ones we saw every time we went into the garden. How will Georgie cope without him I wonder?

Still not able to take in Lenny's swift decline, we bury him in the garden where he had lived, wrapped in an old Catwork sweater of mine.

Lenny represented the essence of what Catwork has been about - looking after cats with special needs.



As a youngster, Lenny was left behind by his owners when they moved away. A neighbour saw and recognised him and took him to a vet in Weston-super-Mare, but not before he had contracted FIV whilst trying to survive.

Vets at the practice had opposing views on FIV - one wanted to put him to sleep (how could she?) and one wanted to save him. Luckily for Lenny, the latter vet had her way, having approached us for help and bringing him to us in the

summer of 2014. What a scared little soul he was! We put him in the sick bay until he got used to us and the routine of life here, until he seemed ready to move into a chalet nearer the house; we felt he was too young and vulnerable to be put in the Fivery with the older guys.

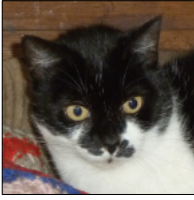
Lenny was soon joined by an even more frightened little FIV female, Georgie, and the pair lived together in an area near the house with their own chalet and garden.

All went well until Lenny became very poorly, and it took time and much investigation at the hospital before we got a diagnosis of e-coli infection, which would go on to damage Lenny's kidneys.

Much medication was put into place to try and limit the kidney damage, and Lenny was checked out at six-monthly intervals at the hospital to see how his kidneys were coping.

Lenny did well for quite some time, so it was a total shock when suddenly, in the summer 2019, he was found to be in renal failure and had to be put to sleep.

I find it so very sad that Lenny's life was cut short because of the e-coli he contracted. I miss little Lenny so very much. He was one of my all time favourite rescues.



## Georgie

With Lenny, her little companion, gone, Georgie seems, understandably, quite lost and is unwell. We do worry for her as she and Lenny have been together for the last five years. Fortunately, they had both been going into the oldies' room, as their area is adjoining and gates had been opened up so that old and young could mix - which they did. It was lovely to see the two youngsters and the two oldies happily mixing together.

The hope is that Georgie will continue to be in the cat room when she wants.

We need to get Georgie to the vet, but catching her has always been difficult, as she is such a scaredy little girl. However, we need the vet to check her over and we find she has a high temperature and is given a jab to bring it down. Unfortunately, there is little improvement and Georgie is not eating, so we have to catch her again. We feel so sorry for her, being poorly, on top of losing her little friend.

At the end of the week, Georgie's temperature is back to normal and, to our immense relief, she again joins Hattie and Mikey in the oldies' room. At least Georgie now has some company again.



## Shadow

Shadow gives us a big shock when, on the day after we lost Lenny, he keels over in the path and is clearly dying!

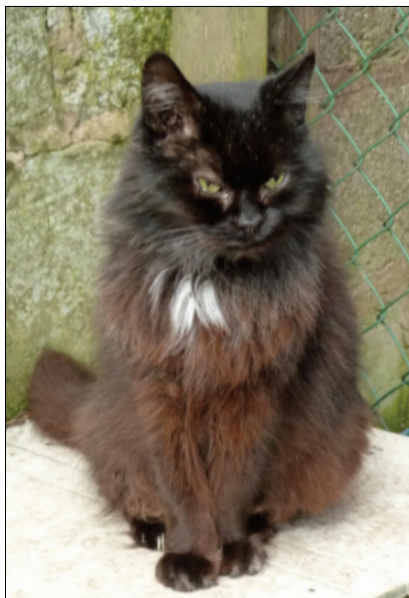
I can hardly believe my eyes; the poor little chap had been doing so well despite being very frail. He had been joining in with everyone else and had breakfast as usual that day.

As it is Tuesday when there are afternoon appointments available over the road, we put Shadow somewhere safe until it is time to take him across to quickly aid the end of the dying process which is clearly under way. I feel so traumatised by recent events that I have no tears left; what a week we are having!

Shadow too had been one of my favourites. He had overcome enormous psychological problems to have got to the stage he was at when we lost him - being happy to be around people just like all the other cats. I was so proud of him!

We took Shadow in 2016; he was one of the most nervous cats we have ever had here.

He had joined a feral colony down in Devon that had to be moved and, at the rescue centre, Shadow was the only one to test positive for FIV. Although the centre tries to home FIV cats as indoor and only cats, Shadow's terrified nature would have made that impossible, and he was in danger of being put to sleep. What a waste that would have been as, underneath his terror, we eventually found a sweet, affectionate little cat who just needed time.



It was some weeks after he came that Shadow began to relate to us; before this, he would hiss and hide whenever we were anywhere near him. At first we put him in the sick bay in the Fivory garden, where he would be aware of the other cats and get used to the routine. After a while we somehow managed to get him into his own area with a chalet to himself. As we saw very little of him, we set up a camera trap, which revealed that, as soon as we were out of the way, Shadow would come out and behave like any normal cat; washing himself and being quite relaxed. All he needed was time and routine, and eventually he trusted us enough to touch him and even comb him! What a star! I felt very privileged when he allowed me to groom him.

As time went by, Shadow grew in trust and confidence, but would still run away and hide when he heard strangers in the garden. In the end, Shadow even learnt to trust visitors, joining in with all the others.

I was so proud of him when, suspecting something was amiss, Shadow had to go to the hospital for blood tests which showed him to be hyperthyroid.

Shadow did well on his medication and also coped with a much needed dental.

He was looking frail towards the end, but he was still eating well and very much part of the gang, so it was a total shock when he suddenly collapsed and was dying.

Shadow did so well here and seemed to love the other cats and garden where he lived. Thank goodness that, after his traumatic past, there was time for his true nature to shine through, and what a sweet natured little cat he was!

Laura and Kim pay us a visit and spend time with the cats.



### **Macavity**

We take on an elderly cat from a rehoming centre, who was in danger of being put to sleep. It was felt he couldn't be rehomed because, after a month in the centre, he remained completely unresponsive, barely moving and effectively 'shut down'.

Prior to being taken to the centre, a lady had been feeding him for a few weeks, but was unable to take him on because her own cats wouldn't tolerate him.

Thinking she was doing the right thing (as anyone would) she arranged for him to be taken into rescue. Who would believe that this move nearly cost him his life?

We are asked if we would have him at Catwork, just for a short time, to see if we can bring him out of himself again.

Once here, Mac (as we call him, for short) 'comes round' incredibly quickly, seeming to appreciate the comfort of his chalet with choice of beds and plenty of food and fresh air.

Believing him to be a bit stiff in the joints, Bob puts in some extra wooden stepping planks to ease the way from the floor up to the different levels - quite unnecessarily as it turns out as, within a few

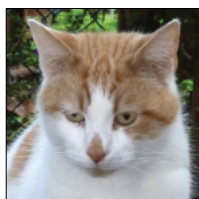


days of having the freedom of the Fivery garden, he amazes us by shinning up the tree to have a good look around his new surroundings!

No longer 'shut down', Mac is soon chivying us up for food at mealtimes, and putting the other cats in their place if they get too close - what a transformation!

It is a sad fact that a pen in a rescue centre is, for some animals, very traumatic. If only long-term facilities could be added to homing centres for the rehabilitation of those animals who need longer for their true nature to emerge and who, with more time, might be able to be rehomed.

As for Mac, he seems fine in his (now permanent) Fivery home.

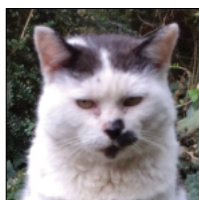


### **Toby**

Toby has a problem with one of his ears, called a haematoma, which is basically bleeding within the ear flap; he has to have it drained. We wonder how he will cope with the 'bonnet' he will need to wear until the stitches can be removed but, in the event,

he copes really well. It is still a relief when the stitches come out.

Vet Michael has done a beautiful job; you would hardly know Toby has had anything wrong with his ear. Cats often end up with a very distinctive 'cauliflower' ear after such an operation, but Toby retains his good looks.



### **Sid**

Sid is not looking so well these days; he is losing weight and seems distressed by his scabby ears. When he came to us he had bad ears because of the white tips being affected by the sun, but during the summer they have got really bad. Sid

undergoes a general health profile, and we debate whether he should have an operation to remove the ear flaps, as he is found to have a heat murmur. However, his ears are so bad and will only get worse, and they are obviously bothering him, so we decide he should have the operation. A date is arranged for this in September.



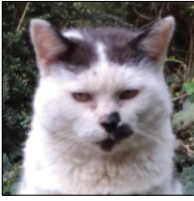
Friend Ella visits the cats for the first time. Later in the month we go to Secret World - our local wildlife centre, which is having an open day. We meet some of the permanent residents.



## SEPTEMBER



Helen pays her second visit and we have a day out in Dunster, a mediaeval village with some interesting buildings which we explore. When we get back, we spend some time with the cats.



## Sid

Sid has the procedure, known as a pinnectomy, to remove his scabby ear flaps. Thankfully, Sid comes through the operation really well, despite our fears about his slight heart murmur.

Poor old boy looks a bit of a mess when we collect him, and he's under strict instructions to keep the 'bonnet' on for two weeks to allow for healing - this he does not like. Bob adapts the headpiece with



extra tape under his front legs (a bit like a harness) making it much more secure and less likely to come off. We keep Sid confined to a decent sized area of the Fivery to lessen the risk of the bonnet coming off.

Everything works well, including Sid coping with eating, one of his favourite pastimes!

When the bonnet comes off everyone is pleased with the result: Sarah the vet, us, and of course, the cat. Well done Sid!



## Mac

Mac seems to be settling in well and, when he joins the others and has full access to the Fivery

garden, he expands his horizons and decides to get a better view by climbing the tree - much to our surprise as we thought he had mobility problems; clearly not as bad as we thought!



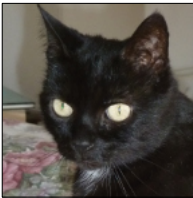


Sara comes down for the day to visit Puss.

## OCTOBER

An easy month for Catwork vet bills; only routine medicines needed. It gives a chance for Catwork finances to recover from the spring/summer bills when several cats needed intensive care over a lengthy period.

### Polly



Polly, who is on our personal account anyway, needs another consultation for the sniffles which have kept recurring this year. She is put on a course of antibiotics to which she responds, with no further flare-ups for the rest of the year.

Stuart and Chris, long term supporters of Catwork, pay us an unexpected visit, and they catch up with the residents in the garden.



## Kim and Julie visit



Sara visits, bringing another present for Miss Puss, which the others take far more notice of than Puss does!

Bob and I go to Minehead to buy some spring bulbs, and fit in a visit to friend Pete and see his latest rescue cat whose elderly owner had died; we fail to get a photo but we do see a terrified tortie quickly scrambling under the duvet! Jodie and Miss Tibbs are happy to pose for pictures.



We have a half term visit from Bob's daughter, Dawn, and family; but no trip up the garden as the weather is not conducive, so granddaughter, Rebecca, has to make do with just the oldies' cat room.

## NOVEMBER



### Marmaduke

Marmaduke, now aged 17, has his kidney function checked out at the hospital. We're delighted with the results which have barely changed since the spring when he was last checked. Considering Marmie is such a fussy eater, and certainly won't touch renal diet food, he's doing extremely well on my homoeopathic kidney remedy (eel serum) which I've used for many years on all kidney compromised cats.

Vet Sarah points out that Marmie could do with a dental, and it would be wise to do it sooner rather than later while his kidneys are in reasonable shape. We decide to go ahead and get this done before the end of the year.



### Coco

We have noticed Coco coughing quite often lately, especially in the evenings, and he also has a very runny tummy. He is checked out at the hospital, much to his dismay as he's such a scaredy cat, despite his size; although, in fact, it would appear that he has lost weight in recent months. Coco has an x-ray at the hospital - he's so scared that he 'freezes', so sedation is not needed. Poor cat!

The x-ray reveals nothing sinister, thankfully, and Coco is put on medication for his digestive upset. He quickly picks up and regains his rather large appetite.

For the first time this year I get some 'brain food'; my daughter found out about a group in Clevedon that holds Saturday workshops on all sorts of topics, one of them being poetry.

We attend a lovely workshop on the way various poets have used birds in their work. It's good to get some mental stimulation at last!

At the end of the month we celebrate our wedding anniversary (beginning to lose count) and go out for a pub lunch.

All through November I write Christmas cards in odd moments. We're fortunate enough to be in touch with so many 'cat people' that I need to begin early to get them all done.

## DECEMBER



### Puss

Puss is not eating much these days, so we get her checked out before the Christmas holiday period starts. Puss has a strange little cyst, like a small bubble, under her tongue, but the vet doesn't think it is anything to worry about.

Once on some medicine, Puss starts eating normally again.



### Marmaduke

Marmie goes in for his dental. Unlike poor Coco, Marmie revels in all the fuss and attention he gets at the hospital. He needs two teeth extracted and has a scale and polish. Although he could come home the same day, his recovery would be aided by being on fluids overnight, so of course we agree to have him stay till the next day. Fully recovered, Marmie is in his element being given so much attention by Hannah the on-duty vet nurse. Everybody falls for Marmaduke!

I go to another poetry workshop at Clevedon, on the difference between free verse and blank verse, which I find really interesting.

Christmas cards and extra donations arrive throughout December; it is so humbling how many people still keep in touch even after the cat they've been involved with has long gone.

We have a get together in early December for my daughter's birthday and, two weeks later, a Christmas get together when presents are exchanged.

We cough and sneeze our way through to Christmas itself, like half the population and bemoan the wet, wet weather! Christmas day itself is a quiet affair - just us and the cats; and so another year draws to a end.

Sara fits in a visit between Christmas and New Year. We hear about her planned move early next year when Miss Puss, who originally adopted her mum, will be going back to Bristol to live with Sara.

## That brings to a close the events of 2019...

We said goodbye to six cats: **Rocky** (p4-5); **Jason** (p8-9); **Justin** (p16-17); **Eddie** (p18-20); **Lenny** (p23-24); **Shadow** (p25-26).

We said hello to two cats: **Mikey** (p3); **Mac** (p27-28).

That leaves just 21 others who were here all year - their updates follow....

## UPDATE ON CATS WITH US ALL YEAR

### The FIVs

#### Trevor

Trevor has been with us since 2011, coming from a FIV-friendly vet practice in Southampton, where he had been taken as a stray. He almost got accepted as the practice mascot, so friendly was he.

Trevor loves his food and loves visitors (especially those bearing treats). He has a very loud, persistent purr. His dental issues now sorted, Trevor has had a good year healthwise.



#### Toby

Toby too came from Southampton in 2011, but this time from a rescue which put down positive FIV cats. A helper at the rescue contacted us and we agreed to take him. Poor Toby was only about 18 months old.

What a tragedy it would have been if the ignorant person who ran the rescue had got her way and had him put to sleep. If only rescues and vets who are still in the

dark ages on FIV would get up to speed on the issue. Although at times appearing a little 'dim', Toby is a lively, friendly boy.

Apart from the haematoma needing sorting, Toby has had a good year.



### Elvis

We took in Elvis from Wales in 2014. He is a strong, handsome cat, but is sometimes likely to give a swipe if he gets too much fussing! Visitors usually get a warning about Elvis and his swiping tendency; all the other cats can never get enough attention and cuddles.

Once again, Elvis enjoyed a healthy year.

### Eric

Eric is another Welsh cat, coming to us in 2015. We were told that Eric had been abused but, luckily, this didn't seem to affect his laid back character. Eric has an area to himself as he is large and has a playful tendency to 'tease' the other cats, who often don't know what to make of him and get worried.



Eric is let into the main Fivory garden when the others retire for the night to their sleeping areas, and is almost always at the gate in the morning, eager for his breakfast, as he loves his food.

Eric is a really big, characterful cat who, so far, has been very healthy.



### Johnny

Johnny came to us in 2017 from a vet in Essex, where he had been taken as a stray. Never very sure of himself, and a bit worried by the other cats, Johnny has always had a chalet to himself at night time. He needed a dental in 2018 and was fine until May 2019 when, what started off

as a urinary infection, developed into life-threatening muscle spasm. A week in hospital with Johnny pulling out his catheter led to a nail biting situation as to whether he would pull through and be able to urinate on his own. Against all the odds, Johnny survived the ordeal. Only after Johnny had finished his many tablets, and a few weeks had passed, did we dare to relax a bit and hope he was sorted.

Thankfully, Johnny seems fine and enjoying his own area at night, and the Fivery garden with the others, by day.

## Sid

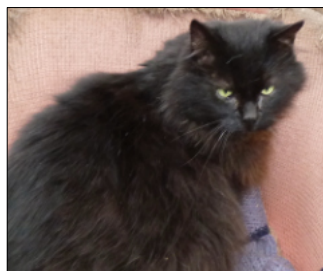
Sid came from Berkshire in 2017, where he was living as a scared stray. The couple who took over feeding him from an elderly lady, realised he needed to be taken into rescue. They contacted CLAWS who asked for our help as he was FIV, and sent him down to us in a taxi! For a few days, scared Sid did nothing but hiss - hence his name (Hissing Sid).



Sid quickly settled in and began enjoying life in the garden, especially the food!

Sid came with bad ears; the tips, being white, had already been affected by the sun, and were scabbed. The heat of 2019's summer affected Sid's ears even more; they became even more scabby and obviously causing him distress, so he underwent an operation to remove them (see page30).

Sid perked up considerably post op. and is now fit and happy again - job well done!



## Louie

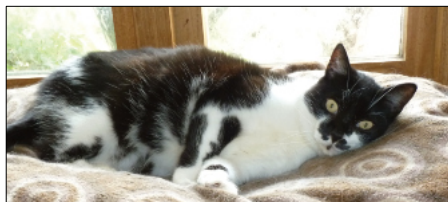
Louie was a stray, trying to survive on a 'bad' estate in Weston-super-Mare. Having been taken to a local vet, the scared little cat hid and hissed all the time so, although this particular practice tries to home FIV cats, Louie didn't present as very homeable. We were

asked to help him and, knowing what might happen to him if we did not, we agreed to take him in August 2018.

Like so many cats before him, it didn't take Louie long to stop hissing and become less nervous. The little chap soon fitted into the life in the Fivery.

All went well until the spring of 2019 when, on Easter Sunday morning, we found him struggling to breathe. An emergency trip to the hospital was vital, and Louie remained in intensive care for several days (see page 10).

Against all the odds, and to our immense relief, Louie survived his attack of pneumonia and has remained well ever since.



### Georgie

Little Georgie had been living on a caravan park in Skegness, and being fed by the park owner who, after Georgie's brother had been run over, and she was diagnosed FIV positive, looked for a permanent place for her - this was Catwork. She joined us in 2014, brought down by friend Kath on one of her visits. Lenny, who was of a similar age and temperament, was already here, and they became a delightful pair, sharing a chalet and garden area close to the house; we felt they were too young and nervous to be with the older FIVs further up the garden.

When we tragically lost Lenny in August to kidney failure due to e-coli virus which he'd contracted, we really felt for Georgie and worried how she would cope without her little companion. She was, in fact, quite poorly in the week following his death, running a high temperature and on medication. When she was better, Georgie started coming back into the cat room to be with the oldies, Hattie and Mikey, which she and Lenny had been doing before. At least Georgie still has feline companions, even if they are twice her age!

Georgie remains very nervous and skittish and disappears out through the cat flap if she hears a strange voice. She has the sweetest nature and loves a fuss, when she is brave enough to allow it, and is a very pretty little cat.

## The other, non-FIV, cats

### Herbert

Herbie was being fed by Rose, a lady who lives on the other side of the village back in the winter of 2017. We got hold of him and, having got him neutered and microchipped, hoped to find him a home. This, however, failed to happen, so we tried him as a house cat, much to the dismay of Marmaduke and Coco, who were really scared of him! So we set Herbie up in the garden with his own chalet to join the FIVs who never had any problems with him.



It would seem as if Herbie was meant to be at Catwork after all, as he has always had digestive problems, thought to be IBD (inflammatory bowel disease). We have tried various diets to try and relieve the condition, and Herbie is on permanent medication. At present he is on a special gastro diet which, fingers crossed, seems to be helping. Despite his issues, Herbie seems happy enough and gets on okay in the garden with the others. Rose, who fed him as a stray, sponsors him, visiting him when possible, each month.



### Solo

This beautiful, friendly, cat had belonged to a breeder who used to show her - in fact she won 'best of breed' at the Supreme Cat Show in 2010 - what a contrast to her life now! Although she seems to much enjoy dashing around the garden.

When her owner suffered a massive stroke, Solo and all the other cats had to be rescued. Solo went to live with a rescuer in Oxford who knew her owner.

Solo went on to develop health issues and, on an in-house test at the vets, came up as positive for leukaemia virus. It was known we had always had leukaemia positive cats at Catwork, so were asked if we would take her. She came to us in 2015.

Three months after her arrival, during which time she displayed many of the signs associated with the virus - mouth issues, bad diarrhoea - she was tested again for the virus and, to everyone's great surprise, the result was negative. It turned out that Solo had been suffering from a far less serious virus - calici, not the life-threatening leukaemia.

Solo soon recovered from her symptoms and remains bright and happy and well, and is the first cat to get on the lap of anyone who sits down for a few minutes on the garden bench.

## **Fidget and Bubbles**

We took on these two in 2015 (and a third, Marmite, who sadly died) as a temporary boarding arrangement for a girl who was being evicted. The cats, we agreed, could stay at Catwork until she found new accommodation. However, Fidget and Bubbles ended up staying as, in time, it became clear that the owner was not going to be able to afford to take them back.



### **Fidget**

Staying at Catwork was probably the best outcome for Fidget, as she is a gentle, older lady, who just seems to want a quiet life and a bit of fuss when she can get it. Fidget remained fit and healthy during 2019.

### **Bubbles**

Bubbles is a younger, small cat, who loves dashing about the garden, playing hide and seek with Toby, the Tonkinese. They seem to have great fun together.

Bubbles had a good year healthwise. Her only problem was the usual loss of fur on the head and neck area, which several of the cats who live in that part of the garden get every year. A shrub which flowers at that time is the suspected culprit, and has now been drastically cut back - let's see if that makes any difference in June 2020.



## Toby

We took on Toby, an extremely scared Tonkinese, in 2016 when his owner and friend of ours, Phyllis, sadly died.

Toby had been bought as a present for Phyllis by her daughters, but it would appear that he had never been socialised, and spent a great deal of his time hiding, being scared of the comings and goings of the carers looking after Phyllis. She loved him all the same and when she passed away in



2016, we knew that Toby would not be homeable, and offered to take him. Toby gets on really well with the other cats, but is still extremely wary of people. When he needs to see a vet, it is a major problem getting hold of him, and a 'cunning plan' has to be devised as to how to get him in the basket.

Toby was quite well during 2019, with just one check-up at the hospital when he needed some investigation as to why he was being sick. He was soon sorted and back to his usual skittish self.



## Jemma

Jemma was found with her brother, Justin, in a box left outside a supermarket. Upon being taken to a vet and tested, Justin tested positive for leukaemia virus, but Jemma did not. They were separated and Justin, because of the virus, would have been put to

sleep had not we been asked to take him. We also took Jemma, as no rescue at the time had space for a young black cat.

Jemma came to live with her brother here at Catwork, and was tested again three months later and found to be still negative for the virus.

Jemma is still with us, but we lost Justin in 2019 to the virus. Jemma remains well and has joined the other cats in the garden, though she does tend to keep herself to herself and has her own chalet overnight.

Every now and then, Jemma gets very vocal, wanting some attention, and she is especially fond of Bob.



### **Puss**

This lovely lady was a stray in Bristol who 'adopted' friend Sara's mum. She was taken on and de-matted, vaccinated and microchipped, and became much loved. When Sara's mum became ill in 2017 and not able to look after Puss, we agreed to have her at Catwork until such time as Sara could take her on.

Puss settled into life at Catwork with no problems; she is such an easygoing lady and has had quite a few visits from Sara throughout the year, and many presents! After the sad loss of both her mum and her own cat, Molly, Sara is hoping to take Puss on once she has completed her move to a new house.

### **Hattie**

Hattie came to us in 2016 with sister, Holly, and little Ginge. They had been part of a multi-cat household all of whom needed to be rehomed.

With age and health issues, the little trio would have been difficult to rehome, so we took them all so they could spend their remaining twilight years together at Catwork. Sadly, in 2018, Hattie lost both her companions and also Albert, an elderly cat from our vets who had joined the gang.



Before long, Lenny and Georgie joined her and were spending much of their time in the cat room as their area can be linked to it. At least Hattie had some company and was later to be joined by another oldie, Mikey.

Hattie, quite an old lady now, sleeps a lot, but had a good year healthwise with only an eye infection to contend with.

## The House Cats



### Marmaduke

Marmie came into our lives in 2002 as a tiny kitten, found on the village by-pass, unable to walk because of an old leg injury which had tried to heal, but not in a way he could use the leg.

Marmie was carried round to our home by the couple who found him crying above the noise of the traffic by the side of the road! His leg was saved and fixed by our vet and, after a long period of cage rest, Marmie has been jumping around ever since, even now, at the ripe old age of 17.

Marmie has early stage renal failure but, so far, not needing medication, although I do give him eel serum homoeopathic remedy, well known for having a beneficial effect on the kidneys.

Known as the 'meet and greet' cat, Marmie has the sweetest nature and is a great favourite with all who visit our home.

He is a much loved member of the Hunt feline family.

### Coco

Coco has been with us since 2011. I was staying with a friend in Sussex, in order to attend a charity fair in London to launch our book we had put together on FIV, when I heard of Coco's plight.

He'd been rescued as a young stray by a terminally ill lady, who was desperate to find him a home; I felt compelled to help. He was said to be about 18 months old, and we thought we could take him as



a house cat. This 18 month old youngster turned out to be a really large, beautiful, black, extremely nervous, boy - and still is!

Coco had been an Eastbourne stray before being rescued, so on the day of departure we collected him from the vets in Eastbourne where he'd spent the previous night.

Once home, we were able to let his rescuer, Mrs Poole, know he was safe and sound in his forever home. The lady died shortly after, but safe in the knowledge that Coco was going to be alright.

Coco is a lovely boy - very affectionate, but only towards Bob and myself; he seems frightened of everybody else and is especially scared of small children, bin men and loud noises. He does, however, love the real log fire we have on winter nights, and food!

## **Polly**

Polly, our little five-toed cat, is now quite an old lady. We've had her here since 2006, when we got involved with her as a stray on the other side of the village.

We kept Polly as a house cat; in fact, she's an indoor cat as she is so

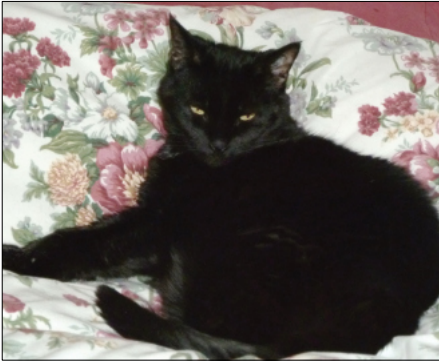


easily spooked and ran off in the early days, having been frightened by something, and was missing for two weeks. Just when we had thought that we wouldn't get her back, we had a call from the lady who had been feeding her as a stray to say Polly had found her way back there!

Polly is quite happy as an indoor cat and has enjoyed good health. She did need a major dental at one stage when all her teeth had to be removed, but that didn't stop her enjoying her food, especially cat biscuits.

The only problem she now gets is winter sniffles, which seem to clear up once treatment is in place.

Polly, like Coco, loves the fire of a winter evening.



## Oliver

We took in Oliver as a stray kitten at Christmastime in 2007. He was found by the postman in a country lane and the people in the only house in the vicinity said he wasn't theirs, but had seen him around, eating food off their bird table! Armed with a saucer of tuna, we easily

caught the little chap, and I drove home with him safe in the carrier.

After a vet check-up he took up residence with the Hunts and, always 'wanting more', he had to be called Oliver. He is in good health, but perhaps a little 'rotund' and takes great delight in teasing poor Polly.

## Little Man

'Littles' came from a farm in Worcestershire where inbreeding amongst the unneutered cats was rife and causing various deformities. Poor Littles, when we took him in 2012, had a twisted neck, giving him a very deformed look. He was, however, extremely active and affectionate. In due course, our vet operated on Littles and removed a huge polyp from his ear and, eventually, his neck straightened up and he looked quite normal.



Littles is quite a naughty little cat - into everything - but is as affectionate as ever, and remains healthy.

## What progress towards dispelling the myths around FIV?

Attitudes towards FIV cats have slowly been changing over the 23 years since we started to learn the real facts around the virus from the cats we took into our sanctuary.

Back in 1997, most of our lovely cats would have been put to sleep if we hadn't taken them in - the idea being that FIV was a 'terrible disease'.

It doesn't bear thinking about the huge numbers of all those lovely cats being killed for no good reason, because vets and rescues so badly misunderstood the real facts about the virus.

Sadly, and to our constant annoyance, far too many vets still think FIV is a terrible virus and often advocate putting an FIV cat down if it can't be kept isolated and restricted.

Happily though, many vets and rescues are more enlightened, and FIV cats are being rehomed, albeit as indoor and only cats.

Our 1000 FIV cats project, where owners enter data about their cat (now with over 980 cats listed) clearly shows that initial straydom and the neglect that goes with it, is the main reason for a cat's poor health - not FIV, which is just an additional factor.

Once rehomed and treated, good health becomes the norm and the cat gets no more health issues than the non-FIV cat and can live to a ripe old age. (see: [fivcats.org](http://fivcats.org))

We are always so pleased when we get feedback from an FIV cat owner who has found our website and seen the project, and tells us how helpful they found it. When we hear that a life has been saved because of our work, it makes it all worthwhile.



**"Real-life" FIV - 1000 FIV cats data project**  
a record of FIV+ cats living 'normal' lives

- Introduction to the project
- Add your cat to the project
- Results - View the project cats
- interesting statistics from project
- 3000 years of FIV experience
- FIV - Information Home Page
- Contact - Notes and About us

## Problems encountered by special needs cats after 'rescue'

'Special needs' can mean different things to different people, but, for us, the term special needs has been about giving sanctuary to FIVs, FeLVs, the terrified and the old.

Down the years we have had cats in all these categories, but predominantly FIV. Back when our sanctuary came into being, almost every cat diagnosed with the FIV virus was put to sleep, so they became very much special needs.

We have found that FIVs, FeLVs, the frightened and elderly can have special problems after rescue, so we thought some examples of what can happen to them might be of interest.

As you can imagine, we get involved with many cats outside of the actual ones here in the sanctuary.

### FIV

For anyone taking on an FIV cat, it is a good idea to find a 'FIV-friendly' vet, as we call them, who won't be blaming all the cat's future health problems on its FIV status. We often get to hear of such cases where this happens; one such cat, Finley, who we got to know about, typifies the "blame the virus" type vet.

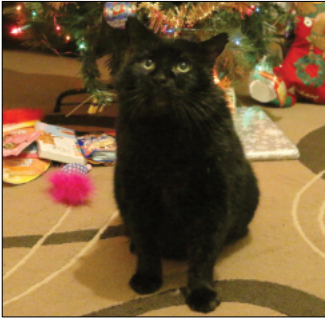
Poor Finley was in a really bad state when he finally ended up at a FIV-friendly rescue last summer, where many of his health issues were dealt with.

After being lucky enough to be adopted by a lady totally committed to him, Finley went on to need more veterinary treatment.

We were contacted by the owner about Finley, and it became apparent that the vet so called 'looking after' him, was blaming his problems on his FIV status instead of the long strydom he had endured - a common occurrence with ill-informed vets.

We suggested a change of vet, making sure that the second vet was FIV-friendly.

The owner followed the advice and finally Finley was taken seriously and his symptoms properly addressed and treated.



Poor Finley suffered unnecessarily for quite some time because of the first vet's lack of understanding.

Fortunately, his owner's determination to help this poor old boy paid off when she found the second vet who treated him properly.

Safe and happy at last, Finley was able to enjoy Christmas feeling, we suspect,

better than he'd felt for a long time. Happy New Year, Finley - you deserve it!

## FeLV

A poor cat diagnosed with the FeLV (Leukaemia) virus has the worst chance of all of living its allotted lifespan, which will be shorter than other cats because of the virus.

Most cats contracting the virus in early adulthood, in our experience, live till around 5-6 years of age; kittens born with the virus rarely make their first birthday.

A positive FeLV test does not always mean permanent infection; some cats can overcome the virus and become negative again, so a second test, three months after the first is required to know for sure if the cat is permanently infected. Often, vets will put down a cat after the first positive test because there is rarely anywhere for it to go to play the 'waiting game' until the second confirmatory test can be done.

This is, of course, absolutely tragic for those cats who might have tested negative on a second test.

We have had quite a lot of FeLV positive cats at Catwork, including, occasionally, ones who have later tested negative. Solo (see page 39) is a good example.

There are a few people out there who will take on a FeLV cat, but they are not easy to find. They need to know that the cat needs to be an only, indoor cat and it won't have a long life expectancy.

Our sanctuary FeLV cats have had the chance of living out what life was theirs. All have presented looking fit and well and remained so

until the virus somehow got triggered. The end often comes swiftly, so these cats don't actually suffer long drawn out illnesses.

Little Justin (see page 16) was our last FeLV cat, who followed the pattern outlined above. Every day is a bonus with a FeLV cat, and although it is heartbreaking when the end comes, one can at least know that the cat had the full lifespan the virus allowed.



## **The terrified**

Cats who are really nervous also present problems for a homing centre, especially if they will not in any way involve themselves with people.

A traumatised, nervous cat rarely copes well in a rescue centre; it takes time for its true character to shine through. Such cats can often be written off as unhomeable. What they really need is a longer stay facility where they can take their time to adjust to the change in their circumstances.

Since, like everything else these days, homing is target driven, we can't see this happening any time soon. Such cats will not be allowed the luxury of the time they so badly need.

We have had a number of very nervous cats at Catwork, Shadow (see page 26) being a notable example. When Shadow lost his fear of humans, his sweet, affectionate, true nature shone through - he was an absolute darling. How privileged we felt when he learnt to trust us!

In 2019, we heard of one traumatised, nervous cat in a rehoming centre. Felix, having lost his home and owner, was not doing at all well, and it was doubtful if he would ever get a home; his future was looking uncertain. A good friend of ours - a bit of a cat whisperer - on hearing Felix's story, offered him a home.

With the right person who was sympathetic to the cat's problems, Felix, in a relatively short time, came round and grew in confidence towards his new owner, and his true character began to shine through.

Felix now follows his new 'dad' everywhere. Not only that but Felix, the clever cat, acted as 'first responder' when a neighbour had a



serious fall in the garden and couldn't get up. Despite being called in for supper, Felix refused to leave the neighbour until his owner went across the road, saw what had happened and phoned for an ambulance! Needless to say, Felix got an extra special supper that night.

So much for the cat that had almost been written off. What a star he's turned out to be!

## The elderly

It can often be difficult for the older cat to get a new home if it should need one, as many people are reluctant to take on a cat with not too many years left and, possibly, with health issues needing ongoing medication.

This is a shame as 'senior catizens' have so much to give. Having 'been there, done that', in their kitten and adulthood, they are often content to just potter around and enjoy a quiet life.

We have had our share of oldies here at Catwork. The cat room, which forms part of the extension to the house, was created especially for the older cat. It was well used back in 2016 when four old dears took up residence in it.

Some of the FIV cats are getting on; contrary to what many people believe, they can live as long as non-FIV cats, and many of ours are now in double figures. Before too long we (Bob and I) will be two oldies trying to look after four-legged oldies in the garden! There's a thought!

## **And finally...**

As we put this yearbook together at the start of 2020 (which is Catwork's 25th anniversary year) it is a good time to reflect on how many great people we have met through the years, who have wanted to help us help the many cats that have come into our care. Some of you have been with us since the very beginning of what was to be a great adventure in discovering the real truth about FIV, learning from the cats themselves.

Incredibly, some of you who have supported us so loyally, we haven't even met in person, and it is therefore very humbling that you trust us to spend your donations wisely, for the benefit of the cats.

Along the way we lose some of our wonderful sponsors who have contributed to the work so much over a long period. In 2019, we learnt of the sad death of Gerry Belton, an ex work colleague of Bob's from before he went freelance; Gerry was a great cat lover.

Then, in early 2020, we heard the sad news of Mike Court's sudden and unexpected death. Mike and Rosemary contributed hugely to the Catwork coffers over many years. It is very sad that the much promised visit to Catwork in 2019 didn't happen, although we have happy memories of previous years' visits, when they did manage to come down from Northampton, stay in the village and spend quality time with the cats they took so much interest in.

In conclusion, all we can say, on behalf of the cats, is the biggest "thank you" possible to each and every one of you, for enabling us to look after so many needy cats who, in their turn, have taught us so much and enabled us to spread the good news about FIV.



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

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

Web: [www.catwork.co.uk](http://www.catwork.co.uk)

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