



THE CATWORK YEAR

2005

10th year of Catworking



We have put a picture of Millie, one of our house cats, on the front cover of this review as 2005 was the 10th anniversary of Catwork, and Millie was one of the very first “special needs” cats brought here all those years ago. She stayed with us, became a house cat, and was the inspiration for the Catwork logo (see more details about Millie in the “House cats” section)

How could we have known that, ten years later, Catwork would be home to 40 cats, and all but two are rescues?

It is very hard work, sometimes very sad, at other times very rewarding, and we couldn't do it without you, our supporters!



UPS AND DOWNS OF 2005

2005 proved to be something of a roller coaster year for us, full of ups and downs. We suffered much bereavement of both people we loved and cats. In the first quarter of 2005 three of our elderly major sponsors died, one of whom was Bob's mother. She, together with Mrs Pope and Mr Davies, had supported Catwork and encouraged us from its earliest days. In losing them, together with the older cats that had been with us several years and who had taught us so much from the early days about FIV, we feel that the very foundations of Catwork have been rocked. Without such wonderful people at the beginning of our venture, Catwork would never have grown into what it is today.

On a more positive note, we have gained some new sponsors along the way, including several at the end of the year who have joined or are about to join the friends of Catwork.

Many, many cats owe their lives to the generosity of those who have supported Catwork and those who continue to do so.

A big thank you to everyone who, in different ways, helps us help the cats.

2 0 0 5 I N M O R E D E T A I L

In 2005, nine new cats found their way to Catwork.

4 were FIV positive

1 had leukaemia and tragically died the day after she got here!

2 were 'special needs'

2 were brought to us having been found abandoned and needing homes.

This year we suffered many losses including most of the original FIV cats who have shaped the work we do and taught us so much. Most reached a good age, but cancer claimed a couple of young ones.

In total we lost thirteen of our rescue cat family, so you can imagine what a sad time we've been having here; many tears have been shed as we kept having to say goodbye to our feline friends.

Considering that our losses have been heavy, it seems incredible that we still have 32 rescues in the sanctuary at Catwork. Of these, 22 are FIV positive, 4 are FeLV positive and 6 are special needs.

As well as the cats that actually come to Catwork, we find ourselves involved in the wider world, getting involved with cat problems much further afield, via the telephone and the Internet. Much can be learnt through the exchange of ideas and, hopefully a few more cats can be helped.

An email and a phone call led directly to the saving of Charlie Brown and Leo respectively (see their stories and photos in the "Cats who found homes" section).

We attended three cat shows, ably helped this year by fundraising friends.

More construction work has been undertaken in the garden. We have added an isolation unit to the FeLV section.

The Fivery had to be secured when, due to the amount of foliage and overhanging branches, Cecil found a way out. Having got out several times all he did was wander up and down the path outside the Fivery trying to get back in! Much pruning and hacking back had to be undertaken and the 'overhang' enlarged.

Nick also found a way out during the construction of some roofing (almost complete) over the chalets. As with Cecil, his biggest worry was the possibility of missing a meal!

We have had many visitors during the year and Stuart and Chris' "Lucy Locket Memorial Seat" has been much sat upon.

Good use has been made of our home-made trap this year. We managed to catch a very nervous little cat who escaped on her way to be boarded at a local cattery – the owner was over the moon and Catwork received a reward!

We also managed to retrieve another nervous little cat who escaped when her owner moved. Poor "Lucky" was out for more than a week in a particularly cold spell of weather. Again, great relief and a reward for Catwork.



Stuart and Chris on the seat they donated, in memory of their cat "Lucy Locket". Cecil gets an extra cuddle too!

SPECIAL THANKS

We are constantly amazed at the level of support and generosity that we receive from such a wide range of people. This year has seen support both from our 'regulars' and several new people.

Without the financial support we couldn't look after the cats, but without the moral support it would be harder for us to keep going.

Thank you, as always, to all our regular sponsors: the security of your regular giving makes it possible for us to judge and to plan what can and cannot be done.



*Our Bristol friends on one of their many visits
l to r: Charlie, Lyn, Sara, Lorna and Sian*

Thank you to our lovely supportive Bristol friends who take such interest in the cats and visit us on a regular basis.

Thanks again to our bus driver friend, Bob, who has continued to bring large bags of sawdust over from Taunton four times a year. He saves us a fortune in cat litter!

Thanks yet again to Barry and Angela who set up "Animal Affairs" and through their charity shop in Bristol, raise funds to help

small animal rescues such as Catwork. We have received several substantial cheques from them throughout 2005. They also arranged for the funeral collection of a cat-loving friend to come to us. Thank you both for continuing to support us.

Thanks again to NASSL (National Animal Sanctuaries Support League) for a large consignment of cat food collected in their various outlets.

We have continued to enjoy help from the West of England and South Wales Cat Club, the Bristol and District Cat Club and the West Country Cat Club.

All three allow us to have a free table at their shows to promote the work and sell items to raise money.

At this point we must mention Stella, who has been supplying lovely goods for the stalls at the shows and masterminded a very successful tombola at a dog show in early summer.



Stella (right) at her tombola stall with helper, Janice, and a customer

Thank you to Daphne who has included Catwork in her fundraising efforts for animal charities, and to Ann and Ron Weaver who ran the stall at the West Country Show and have been very generous to Catwork.



Ann and Ron doing sterling work at a show at Hutton Moor

Thank you to Mary McGuire, a great cat-lover who, with her husband Eddie have taken on stray cats all their lives. When Mary retired from her job, early in 2005, she asked that, instead of a leaving present, people donated money to Catwork. Such a lovely gesture!

Thank you to Mr Davies' sister who, after his death, sent a generous cheque for the "prawn fund". Mr Davies, a sponsor of Catwork from the beginning of the FIV work (Harry was his chosen cat) used to visit and always brought them prawns!

As already mentioned, a very special friend and sponsor from the beginning, Mrs Pope, died this year, and it was decided by her family that the money collected in her memory should be given to Catwork. So, thank you Mr and Mrs Lord for arranging this and for your own generosity to Catwork.

Unexpected generosity came in the form of a cheque for £100 from Candy in America (Florida) with whom we had been corresponding by email about an FIV kitten problem. It is rewarding for us to think that, through the Internet and our website, we are able to help people and FIV cats across the world.

Thank you to Kathy and Gerry, of Wessex Animal Trust, who bought Catwork cards to sell in the shop and helped to spread the word about the work.

Thanks to Forest of Dean Cats Protection who not only sponsor Tutts, who came via their group, but also have a collection tin in their charity shop for "Tutts and friends". They sent us a generous cheque before Christmas.

A chance look around a cat shop (selling gifts, not cats!) in Bourton-on-the-Water when Barbara and her daughter were having a weekend away this summer, had some amazing repercussions. Lorraine and Chris, who run "Only Cats", took a great interest in the work with FIV and



Steve, Claire (the Catwork outpost) and Bernie - they have seven cats from Catwork between them, and still find time to visit and support us!

FeLV cats, and have purchased two large card orders from us and had a display about Catwork in their shop. As a result of this we have come to the attention of a group called CLAWS in Maidenhead who sent a very generous cheque and they hope to visit us in the spring with thoughts of setting up a sanctuary of their own. Thank you very much.

The shop has also been responsible for the recruitment of two new sponsors who are about to join us. So a huge thank you to Lorraine and Chris in Bourton-on-the-Water for making this possible.

Finally, as usual, many thanks to all at the Quantock Veterinary Hospital. The cats receive excellent care from the vets and we receive invaluable help and advice, which is much appreciated.

“Thank you” seems a small response to all those, without whom, Catwork could not, and would not survive.



Vera and Barbara with Percy, Tigger and Cecil
Vera is the friend who gave Peggy such a good home (see “How it all began” section)



Another visit from Sara, Charlie, Annie, Lorna, Lyn and Sian



Judy, a friend for many years, visits Doug, whom she sponsors



Lisa introduces Percy Pollen to baby Amelia



Sara gives the cats a chicken treat!



Bob and Sandra from Wales - Dylan's rescuers and sponsors, seen here with Bruce and Percy Pollen pushing Bob off the end of the seat!



Carol and Dave who have for years sponsored Patrick and visit us twice a year. They are continuing to support us after we lost Patrick this year. Here they give Captain and Cecil some attention



Maurice, Margaret, Wendy and Olivia with Fluff, the cat they rescued. - we really must get a longer seat!



..later...Doug has a quiet word with Maurice



John, all the way from Edinburgh, with Patrick



Brian has for years refused to visit us, saying that it would be too upsetting to see all those “ill cats”!
Finally, this year he came, and now believes us when we tell him they are not ill - I think we may see more of him in the future!
Beryl, his partner, is a long-standing sponsor (she could have sat down!)



NINE NEW ARRIVALS IN 2005

DAVEY (FIV)

Davey arrived in Spring through a cat rescue contact who had been told about him by her vet in Bristol. He had been left behind when the owners moved away! A neighbour tried to find a home for the cat, calling him "Daphne": being rather fluffy and pretty they thought he was a she. The home did not materialise, however, and Daphne ended up at the vets where he tested positive for FIV.



We realised as soon as Daphne – now Davey – arrived, he probably had kidney problems, and blood tests showed this to be correct.

Being on medication and special diet bought him some time, and he was able to enjoy the long hot summer in the Fivery before his kidneys finally gave out.

SANDY (Special needs)

Sandy is a very pretty but tremendously nervous cat who came to us when her owner died. In as much as she would be impossible to rehome in the normal way, she falls into our category of "special needs" cats.



Sandy spent the first two months hiding behind the chalet and only coming out when there was no one around.

Finally, the breakthrough came and she allowed us to stroke her. After that, there was no looking back and she has become the most affectionate of cats. Sandy now lives in her own chalet nearer the house, and we hope one day she might be brave enough to join the house gang.

CICCI (FeLV)

This is one of the saddest cases – a friend and sponsor in Wales was asked by her vet if she knew anyone who would take a little cat who had tested positive for leukaemia. Having just finished the new isolation pen in the Felvery, we agreed.



Cicci arrived on a summer Sunday, desperately thin, having just been spayed and her ear stitched up, which her owner had neglected to do anything about. Once the owner knew she was FeLV positive she did not want her back.

We settled Cicci into the brand new chalet and began feeding her up, little and often. Next morning we checked on her around 8am and she seemed fine. But during the morning rounds about 30 minutes later, Barbara found her stretched out on the ground, collapsed! Bob rushed her into the hospital in Bridgwater where she was seen immediately and put into intensive care. Very, very sadly, she kept having fits and never properly regained consciousness. On the Tuesday morning, the vet asked permission to put her to sleep to prevent more suffering. It was thought that she may have had a brain tumour, but we will never really know. What a sad end for such a sweet little cat who had been so badly neglected.

PENNY (Needing a home)

Although trying not to get involved with cats that need a home, occasionally one cannot avoid it, as with Penny, a beautiful middle-aged tortie.

She was found, we were told, by workmen, abandoned in a cat carrier outside the public loos up in the Quantock hills. Workman and cat turned up on our doorstep one evening. There being nowhere else she could go we had to take her in and told



everyone we could think of she was needing a home. We called her Penny because of where she was found!

An article and photo about her in the local paper proved unsuccessful in finding her a home. Eventually, after she had been here some weeks, friends and sponsors we had known for years came to visit and Penny managed to win them over and she went back to Chipping Sodbury with them where she now rules the roost. Thank you Margaret & Maurice for all you have done for Catwork and for giving Penny such a super home.



LUCKY (Special needs)

Lucky came here almost by accident, the week before Christmas. We had used our trap to retrieve her after her owner had gone into a residential home, taking Lucky with her. The nervous little Lucky had, however, managed to escape soon after the move and was out for more than a week in freezing temperatures. Once we heard the story and began setting the trap, we managed to catch her despite the attempts of the resident house cat and, we think, a badger to pinch the food in the trap.



Once caught, Lucky remained with her owner for a couple of weeks and we thought all was well. When she went out, however, she was getting beaten up by the resident house cat and was too scared to go back indoors. Having caught her a second time in the trap, she came back to Catwork for the Christmas period for safety while we see what is best for her long term.

CHARLIE (FIV)

We were asked to take Charlie by a cat rescue in Bristol who is unable to deal with FIV cats. Charlie's owner had to leave his home, so Charlie, too, became homeless. Being FIV it was not going to be easy to find another. Added to which, Charlie has considerable behaviour problems which we are still trying to get to grips with.



Charlie has not been with us long, so we are not sure what to make of him;

in fact he's rather scary as he growls and hisses a lot. We are currently trying Bach flower remedies and a homoeopathic one (belt and braces) and fancy they are helping.

Poor Charlie (and us!) he's probably our biggest challenge yet!

O'MALLY (FIV)

O'Mally came to us through a friend and sponsor who works in an RSPCA centre in Wales. Mary had just sent us little Cicci when O'Mally, a very scruffy, skinny "ally cat" stray was brought to her centre. We really had to fight to stop him being put down as he was tied up in red tape – should the collection officer (responsible to RSPCA headquarters) have the casting vote and have him "bumped" in his words, or would the centre manager be able to let Mary help him?

In the end, common sense prevailed and Mary got her way and brought him to Catwork, having given him a bath first!

Look at him now – fluffy, fat, handsome and lively natured. What a tragic waste if the RSPCA collection officer had got his way!

Pictures top to bottom:

On arrival, still a bit scruffy

Now, feeling better

On look-out duty in the Fivery, enjoying not having been "bumped"!



BATMAN (FIV)

Another battle was waged, this time with Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, to save this little chap, only a youngster.

He was being fed as a stray all summer by his rescuer, Heidi. Unable to give him a permanent home, she took

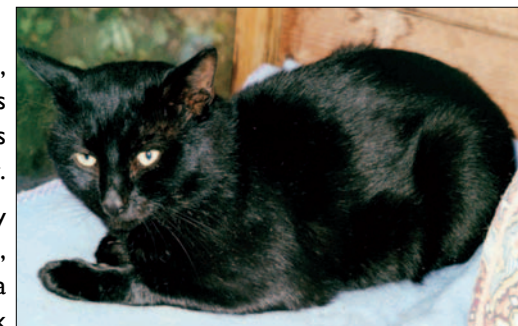
him along to Battersea to be rehomed. She was devastated when he tested FIV positive and was told he would be put down. When this happened, the fight was on to save him. An urgent email came through saying he was to be put down that same afternoon, and after many phone calls, nothing Heidi could say would get the staff to change their mind even though, by then, we were offering him a place at Catwork. Barbara joined in with more phone calls to the "powers that be" and Heidi threatened to go to Battersea and do a "sit-in". Finally Barbara managed to leave a message to the vet who was to perform the deed, saying: "We could not believe how hard we were having to fight to save an animal's life from Battersea". That seemed to do the trick and they agreed that Heidi could bring the cat to Catwork – he arrived the very next day.

Having "battled" against great odds at "Battersea", the name "Batman" seemed to say it all! He is now generally referred to as "Batty".

JACK (Needing a home)

Last, but certainly not least, a little black kitten of approximately 8 weeks was brought to the door in the summer. He had been found wandering and crying near the local primary school, but much asking around and local advertising telling of his whereabouts, did not result in him being claimed.

Jack (you've guessed) ended up staying and joining the Hunt cats in the house. He's grown into a lovable little tearaway who manages to do a good demolition job most evenings.



CATS NOW IN HOMES



CHARLIE BROWN

An email that came through in January '05 about an FIV cat called Charlie, in Coventry RSPCA centre, sent by one of the staff, posed a real problem.

Charlie was on “death row” – it was discovered that he was FIV when a local vet asked the centre for a really “healthy” specimen to donate blood for a client’s cat, and Charlie was chosen. He had not been tested before as he had not been a ‘candidate’ for FIV having been someone’s pet, neutered and well cared for. Once his FIV status became known, it became impossible to rehome him for all the usual reasons: ignorance, prejudice etc.

Charlie’s carer found the Catwork website and asked for our help.

Barbara had come to know a lovely cat-loving lady, Marilyn, who lives on the outskirts of Oxford: thinking “that must be near Coventry” Barbara asked Marilyn if she could help. Marilyn did just that. She drove to Coventry and adopted Charlie.

Barbara and her daughter had a weekend in Oxford in the summer in order to meet “Charlie Brown”, as he is now known. He certainly lived up to his reputation – huge, friendly and the star attraction of the Brown household.



Charlie Brown in relaxed mode



PENNY

See details in “9 new arrivals”. Penny now has a wonderful home with long-time sponsors of ours in Chipping Sodbury.



LEO

Leo was brought to Barbara’s attention by a vet who used to work for the practice we use (and was therefore well-trained about FIV!). He’d had a sweet, elderly cat brought in by a client whose dog had found him in her garden. The vet treated him and a blood test revealed he was FIV+. Being reluctant to put him down, the vet thought of Catwork and asked us if we could help.

Discovering that the lady lived in a very isolated place with no other cats around, we saw no reason why the cat (Leo) couldn’t stay put, provided that Barbara could persuade the lady, who had already grown fond of him, that all misgivings about FIV were completely unfounded.

Leo was saved, although the vet’s partner, who neutered the cat a few days later, had other ideas and wanted to put him down! A frantic phone call from the surgery to Catwork (thank goodness Barbara was here) led to Barbara having to draw upon all her powers of persuasion with the owner all over again. (see comment in “what we are up against” section).

Common sense prevailed, thank goodness. Leo was neutered and a few days later, when Barbara had to be in that area, she went to visit Leo. The dog who had found him exhausted in the garden, acts as his ‘minder’ and they have become the best of friends.

Leo hardly ventures far from the back door, and deserves to spend his senior years in such a wonderful place.

Leo and Charlie Brown will never know how close they both came to death because of all the nonsense bandied about, concerning FIV.



Leo with his minder!



JACK

See details in “9 new arrivals” and “House cats”. Not too difficult to find a home for Jack – he has joined the household!

THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2005

Those who saw our 2005 diary may remember that we lost just two cats in 2004. 2005, however, has been quite different: thirteen Catwork cats died through the year, many of whom had been with us for years.

HARRY

The first of our many losses of 2005 came in February when our dear Harry, who began the work with the FIVs, died in his sleep after being off-colour the previous day.

Harry had come to us with his dad back in 1997 when the lady who had been feeding them as strays emigrated to Canada. Little did we realise when we agreed to take them on, knowing hardly anything about FIV, how that would change both our lives and enable many other FIV positive cats to have a life as well, instead of being put down.



Harry was at first terrified, and it took two or three months to win his confidence. He had the sweetest nature and was the most affectionate of cats.

Although he had evidently had flu before he came to us, and he always had a bit of a 'sniffle' he actually enjoyed extremely good health all the years he was with us, only needing treatment once to sort out some poor teeth.

Barbara would tell him most days, looking around at the rest of the sanctuary: "What a lot he had to answer for!"

Harry was chosen by one of our first sponsors, Mr Davies, who called him his "god cat". Mr Davies would come on the bus from Bridgwater to visit Harry, usually armed with a bag of prawns which were shared out amongst the garden gang. We think Mr Davies enjoyed being "mugged" by them all; Harry and his friends certainly enjoyed his visits!

Very strangely, Mr Davies, a musician of some renown it would seem, outlived Harry by just a couple of weeks and passed away in much the same manner. We miss them both so much.

NELSON

Nelson had always been a great friend of Harry and, although he did not seem particularly unwell, after Harry died he moved himself into a different chalet and just faded away, and died within weeks.

Nelson had been with us since those early days of FIV work when it began to hot up in 1997. He had been a much abused stray from a nearby village. Nelson flourished here and lost his nervousness as time went on.



When he first came, he needed an infected eye removed but, apart from a dental, had no other health problems whilst with us.

Nelson's rapid decline after losing Harry does, we believe, show how deep the cats' relationships can be.

LOUIS

Louis was another of our 'oldies', although we did not have him from a young age. Louis was a Bristol stray and a great character. He could "eat for England" and would "quack" sounding a bit like a duck!

His weight loss had been giving concern in 2004 and he had many tests including an x-ray, but all were inconclusive.

Finally, with his quality of life gone and him not wanting to eat, we had to have dear Louis put to sleep.



BRUNO

Bruno was just a young cat (featured in April, 2005 diary) beautifully marked. He had come to us through a friend and sponsor who works at an RSPCA centre in Wales where FIV cats are often put down (as they are in most RSPCA centres).

The last cat we would have imagined to be terminally ill was Bruno. We watched in disbelief as he began rapidly to lose weight and condition. An examination followed by an x-ray revealed that he had an inoperable stomach cancer. Poor Bruno was dead within two weeks of diagnosis as our vet predicted.

The only consolation is that he died as nature intended and not at the hands of man for whom he had been an inconvenience due to his FIV status.



BENSON

Benson was another stray from Bristol, who had never looked well from the start. He was a sweet natured cat who did well here but was at the mercy of a mouth cancer. An operation was attempted to see if anything could be done, but the cancer proved to be too far advanced and the decision was taken not to let him wake up from the anaesthetic. Like Bruno, Benson had some quality time while he was able, joining in life in the Fivory.



GRANNY

Our sweet little Granny cat, who lived in the house, did so well, improving in her walking to the extent that she would trot around demanding food and cuddles. We would never have believed when she arrived, that she would clamber up onto the bed, but this she did after several months of her Arthritis 'jungle juice'. Tragically, it was this very activity that led to her end, as she damaged her back leg – we think from falling back from the bed. Being elderly and very frail, nothing could be done for her leg, and we were left with no option.

For one so small, she made a big impact on us!



BILLY

Billy's owner had died and we took him on just a year before he died himself. We knew Billy was FIV positive and had chronic mouth problems but didn't know, until he collapsed on us a couple of months after he got here, that he was also suffering from a heart problem, about which nothing much could be done apart from medications to try and keep it under control.

Billy did very well and, like Gran, he lived in the house. He had started off in the Fivory, but moved into the house as his condition worsened. He loved the log fire and pottering about the garden.

By the end, Billy was on four tablets a day for his heart, but eventually it got much worse and we lost him, after being with us for just a year.



GABRIEL

Those who saw our 2005 diary, will remember Gabriel as the December cat. He was waiting for a second test for FeLV and we had high hopes that he might test negative and therefore could make someone a wonderful pet.



Nothing could have prepared us for what happened - Barbara took Gabriel across the road to the surgery for his routine blood test to be sent away to determine whether Gabriel had cleared the virus, or remained permanently infected with leukaemia.

Gabriel, who looked the very picture of health, went into cardiac arrest on the vet's table and, despite all he could do, the vet was unable to revive him.

Barbara, the vet and the nurse stood around this beautiful cat unable to believe what had just happened. We had such high hopes for Gabriel; as a super pet if he was negative, or if not, he would have stayed here with the other FeLVs.

Some leukaemia cat deaths can be sudden (see also Cicci) while others can seemingly live with the virus for years before it "kicks" in.

Barbara has never really got over the shock of losing Gabriel so suddenly. The only consolation is that his heart attack occurred with the vet in attendance, and Gabriel would not have suffered for long.

Gabriel had come in just before Christmas 2004 and, being mostly white, looked like a Christmas angel. Perhaps now he really is.

DAVEY & CICCI

Davey and Cicci both arrived and left us in the same year. See "New arrivals section"



BEN

Ben was our sweet little cat from Bristol who brought us into contact with our lovely Bristol friends who visit us regularly.

Ben had been a stray in Sara's garden and when he tested positive for FIV a cat contact directed Ben to Catwork where he spent over two years. He was always a sweet, inoffensive soul, getting on in years when he came, but he knew his way round life in the Fivery.



Ben's kidneys began to fail and he too was put on tablets and special diet. However, it was a fit that led to Ben's end. Bob witnessed the fit so we were alerted, but we will never know how many others may have occurred without our knowledge.

Ben rapidly deteriorated and then seemed to have suffered some sort of stroke, and we very sadly had to end his suffering by having him put to sleep. Many tears were shed in Somerset and Bristol on that day! One never gets used to saying goodbye.

TIGGER

Tigger, although her usual bossy self towards the other cats, grew very affectionate towards humans. She was such a great little character, and her death took us by surprise.



Tigger had been losing condition and weight and it was decided she needed a dental.

Tigger had to lose most of her teeth, but it didn't seem to worry her as she always loved her food and coped very well.

The weight loss continued and, on the brink of further investigation, Tigger died in her sleep – a nice way to go, but always a shock for us.

Tigger had been a pet who had to be given up as she was so stressed at being indoors. She loved it in the garden here, where her owners continued to sponsor her and, upon her death, gave Catwork a generous donation.

Apart from three elderly FIV ladies (Molly, Florence and Jemima) who live in their own area nearer the house, we now have no female FIVs in the Fivery.

PATRICK

Patrick has been with us since a youngster, when he was brought to our notice by someone in the village – so thin his bones showed through his sparse fur.

Patrick grew into a beautiful long-haired ginger, and, in his prime, looked extremely handsome. We have used him as an example on our website to illustrate how an FIV cat with a poor start can turn around with care, attention and a good diet.



Patrick never needed to see the vet until the day before he died, when, for the first time in his life, he didn't finish a meal! Suspecting a dental problem, he was examined by the vet and he found a tumour in the mouth – always bad news, as it is often indicative of other tumours elsewhere.

Patrick was booked into the hospital to be dealt with under anaesthetic, but the following day he seemed to be having slight breathing problems. We put him in our hospital bay in the Fivory but next morning we found he had died overnight.

Patrick had been sponsored for years, by Carol and Dave, who used to come twice a year to see him (and us); he will be much missed by them as well.

Patrick must have picked up FIV as a very young cat, and this, together with the fact that before he came to us he was mostly starving, gave him a terrible start in life. We believe that, although he recovered to be fit and handsome, this poor start had the effect of reducing his natural resilience, and although he was not ill while with us, probably led to his relatively short life.

We like to think that we kept our promise to him when he arrived, that he would never be really hungry ever again – he, however, would have told you that he was permanently hungry!

Finale for a stray

He has caught his fair share of mice,
Seen life through those amber eyes.
With his kitten capers long since over,
He strayed, late, into my life.

Eagerly would he await
The morning round,
Bellowing fortissimo;
Grateful for a belly full
Of food, and shelter
Against the cold.

His fur of tabby hue still soft,
Shrouding his skeletal form.
So hungry, needy, had he come,
So loving, grateful, has he been.

Now his all too brief stay
Is nearly over.
His eyes, now sunken,
Their amber light
Fading, he stretches out,
One last time,
A grateful paw
Against my trembling hand.
I watch him draw his dying breath
As, peacefully, he welcomes death.

The old cat no longer dances.

Barbara Hunt
July 2002

Poem, written by Barbara, when we lost Sid,
a hospice case, after a short stay in 2002



Sid

UPDATE ON OTHER CATWORK CATS



THE FIVs

DOUGAL

Dougal has not looked back since his successful thyroid operation in 2004 and has had a trouble-free year, eating for England and looking well.



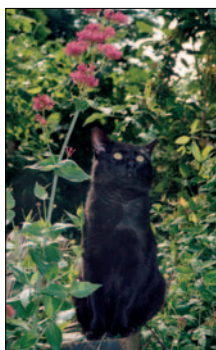
DONNY

Donny, the cruelty case cat who had been almost starved to death, is now a really big cat, and even plump! It was thought when he arrived that he would always need a special diet as his digestive system had been impaired. Donny had other ideas; he loves his food (understandably) and has had no health problems at all in 2005.



BRUCE

Bruce was having severe mouth problems (stomatitis) in 2004 to the extent that he was at times unable to eat. A major dental worked wonders and he has had a really good year in 2005. Bruce has made friends with Captain and they can often be seen playing together.



NICK

Nick, our scruffy little rescue from the Blue Cross in 2004, where he was on death row, has blossomed into a lovely chubby cat with a nice nature. He had no health problems in 2005.

TUTTS

Tutts, our "senior citizen" from the Forest of Dean Cats Protection has had a trouble-free year. He is in remarkably good condition and is very active for his age; he is able to get further up the tree than most (and down again, thank goodness!). Tutts is a really nice friendly cat who mixes well with the others.



GUY

Guy, our escape artist at the end of 2004 has stayed put in the Fivery since we got him back a week after his escape. He has had no health problems and is a really good looking cat.

Unfortunately for him, Guy does not like being with other cats too much and 'grumbles' about this. He has learnt to cope with life in the Fivery, but is one of the 'loners'.



REGGIE

Reggie, who came from the local CP has remained at Catwork. All attempts to clear up his scarred nose have been unsuccessful, but he does not seem bothered by this. Reggie is now living in the main Fivery as he is no longer thought to be infectious to the other cats; this has obviously improved his quality of life and it is great to see him shinning up the tree and generally making the most of the enlarged area of freedom.



PERCY POLLEN

Percy, who lives permanently at Catwork, but belongs to a friend whose rescue closed, had a close shave last year when he appeared to be having breathing problems, on top of his usual sniffles he has always had. Antibiotics and steaming him with Olbas oil vapour did nothing to alleviate the breathing problem which just seemed to get worse.

Barbara took him to the hospital for emergency treatment where he was placed in an oxygen tent. A subsequent x-ray revealed nothing, so next day Percy was anaesthetised and an endoscope examination revealed his larynx was blocked, forcing him to breathe through a small hole. A long course of treatment followed and Percy Pollen made a good recovery.

Percy is the cat who always wants to climb on visitors and drape himself round their neck!



JAKE

Jake, along with Percy Pollen, belongs to our friend who funds them. Jake is quite an independent little cat who lost his tail as a youngster. Jake had no health problems last year.



CAPTAIN

Captain, our three-legged ginger, who is the last of our “founder FIVs”, has done well this year despite getting on in years and losing many of his friends who were with him from the start; he has, however, made new friends.

Captain is well-named as he commands the respect of the other cats, never looking for trouble, but quick to put a stop to it when trouble arises.

Apart from an abscess on his foot, Captain has had a vet-free year.



FLUFF

Healthwise, Fluff has had no problems. His biggest problem is his coat, as his long fur gets very easily matted, and he complains bitterly when we try to deal with it! He is very fussy over his food, usually preferring dried.

Fluff has been with us several years with no health problems, and it is his rescuers, Margaret and Maurice, who kindly gave a home to Penny (see “cats we have homed” section).

SEAMUS

Seamus, a large tabby, had recurring anal gland blockages (see health section) and was often miserable, as one gland would abscess. Homoeopathic treatment and bran on his food has kept him clear of this problem for many months now – quite a relief for us, and him! Seamus has always lived with Bootsy in a special area of the Fivery, as they used to be the “bovver boys”. Recently, we tried them in the main Fivery again with the others and they seem to have reformed – we hope they can keep it up!



BOOTSY

Bootsy has always been accident prone. In 2004 we nearly lost him to blocked urinary tract; early in 2005 he managed to puncture his eye, which could have resulted in the loss of sight in that eye. Prompt surgery and prolonged aftercare meant his sight was saved and the second half of 2005 was much happier for him.

Bootsy has recently been allowed, along with Seamus, to join the main gang as he no longer seems to be the troublemaker he once was.



MR CHIPS

Chips alarmed us during 2005 when we noticed a big lump in the middle of his back. There was no way of knowing whether this lump was malignant or not until he had an operation to remove it. Fortunately, the lump was not serious, just fatty tissue. Poor Chips had to wear a collar for quite a while as the area healed. At this point he decided to move himself to a different chalet where life was quieter and more suited to his temperament. Apart from his lump, Mr Chips has had a good year.



CECIL

Cecil, along with Bruce, suffered badly with stomatitis in 2004/5. A second major dental solved his problem and Cecil went on to have a much happier year being able to enjoy his food again. Cecil is one of the quieter cats and keeps himself to himself, but loves it when visitors come.



TABBY PERCY

Another little cat who has been here for some years, Percy has not had any health problems and is never any trouble. Percy is a shy little cat, but there is quite a personality underneath.

THE OLD LADIES



Our three elderly FIV ladies live together in their own chalet with covered run away from the turmoil of the Fivery.

MOLLY



Molly, whose owners went to Greece to do work with the cats on Corfu, has enjoyed another healthy year and has not needed to see the vet. She remains very sprightly for her years and still gets up on the highest shelves even though she has “wobbly” back legs. Molly is quite a character and has a lovely nature.



FLORENCE

We have had Florence (and friend Jemima) for over two years and Florence has so far not needed to see a vet despite getting on in years. She has “filled out” and looks in remarkably good shape. She loves the basket chair in their geriatric area, but has finally conceded to her age and has started to use a hooded bed inside the chalet.



JEMIMA

Jemima has had many ups and downs throughout the year because of her really bad mouth – stomatitis (see health section). We have tried so many things in order to alleviate the problem. Steroid injections worked for a while but had to be given with increasing frequency, which is not good for an FIV cat. Ovarid, a hormone treatment, also worked for a while. Homoeopathic and tissue salt remedies have been tried, but our greatest success has been recently with a herbal remedy whose basic ingredient is red clover.



We managed recently to have a good look in her mouth and most of the extreme redness has gone – we are hoping it is gone for good!

THE FELVs



GILES

Giles has had a trouble-free year and is looking fit and well (as do all four FeLVs). He now has Ginny as a companion, although during the day all four FeLVs mix together. Giles has recently attracted a sponsor (Ellie, aged 5) who particularly liked the look of Giles (Ellie’s Mum sponsors Bruce).



GINNY

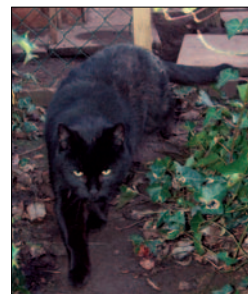
Ginny, our only FeLV lady, whom we have had since 2002, has also had a vet-free year. She is a large beautiful tabby who attracted the attention of a lady in Leicester who went on the web wanting to sponsor a cat who could not easily be homed. Thank you to Carol and her Mum who became sponsors and also send treats through the post for all the cats.



DYLAN

Dylan is our large tabby male from Wales who looks a bruiser and does like to throw his weight around a bit. The other leukaemias, being large themselves, are a match for him, especially Ginny who puts him in his place!

Dylan turned out to be ‘borderline’ positive for leukaemia when lab tests were done in 2004, and we have not had a test done since. Whatever his status may be, he certainly seems in the best of health at present and could ‘eat for England’. Luckily Dylan is now sponsored by the Wickstones in Wales who rescued him and brought him to us.



JORDAN

Jordan was brought to Catwork all the way from East Anglia where he had been a pet diagnosed FeLV positive for a number of years. He is probably the largest cat in the sanctuary.

Jordan, too, has had a vet-free year – it is amazing that all the leukaemia cats have been so healthy – long may it last!

SPECIAL NEEDS and OTHERS



RANI

This little black cat who had been abused, has done really well having lost her aggression. At first Rani was a scary little girl whom we approached with great caution. She loves her food and bellows loudly for it. Rani has had a trouble-free year, healthwise.



CASPER & TOMTOM

The two large black cats who do everything together have really blossomed. They came in very frightened in 2004, but have grown in confidence and are doing very well – there have been no health problems.

Casper and Tomtom have their own chalet and mini garden which is self-contained and seems to suit them well. They now have access to the main garden at night while all the FIVs are in their own areas.



TABBY THOMAS

TT is probably our most difficult cat, mainly because he 'adopted' a neighbour who gives him 'special' food all the time, making it extremely difficult for us to deal with him. TT originally came to Catwork in the earliest days and was not young then; he was homed, and then had to return some years later. He looks elderly and frail but is seemingly indestructible!

TT is in need of daily enzymes sprinkled on his food because of his digestive problems (see health section), but because we can't stop others feeding him, we are not able any longer to ensure that he gets the medicine he needs. This has proved very frustrating, as we know the enzymes are working. The enzymes are expensive, but important, so somehow we have to persevere. (Note: As we complete this booklet, the neighbour has gone into hospital, so we are more in control again for a while.)

TT has gone through life attracting attention only to be let down in one way or another, even if unintentionally, but he is proving most difficult to help.



Enjoying the late autumn sunshine



...or they share the warmth from the tube heater just below the shelf!



Marmaduke guards his supper



Bruce and Captain have a friendly tussle - they often play together



Captain and Percy Pollen share a napper



Chips suffering the 'bonnet'

OTHERS PREVIOUSLY HOMED



KITTY (Daisy May)

Kitty, our FIV lady who had been part of a prosecution case for two years before coming to Catwork, has really fallen on her feet, having been taken on by Stuart and Chris, two of our sponsors who gave us a donation as a memorial to their previous cat, Lucy Locket; we purchased the seat for the Fivery with it.

Although Daisy is small, we're told she has an enormous appetite! She will never go hungry again, that's for sure.



PEBBLES

Pebbles, who had been abandoned in Bristol, found her way to Catwork and was then homed to a friend of many years' standing, who had previously had a Catwork cat, Mr Tiggs.

Pebbles, like Daisy May, has a home to die for! She has even adjusted to living with another cat, Rocky, rescued by her owner when he found him with a terrible neck injury caused by his collar embedded in the flesh. For a while it was like world war three, but Rocky, being a laid-back cat, took no notice of Pebbles' hisses. Now they rub along in a very amusing love-hate relationship. Two more lucky cats!



BLAKE

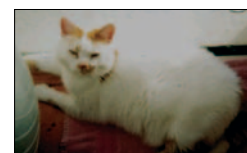
Blake was taken on by a lady near us who had sadly lost one of her four cats and gave him a home without even knowing his colour or temperament, to make a quartet again.

Blake settled in from day one. Having been a stray in Bridgwater he must have felt in feline heaven to live in the country surrounded by fields in yet another wonderful home.



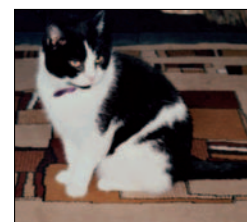
GINGER

Going back further in time are Ginger and Curly, both FIV and in good homes. Barbara saw Ginger recently when his owners brought him to the vet for his annual health check. He is looking good and, apart from one respiratory infection, has had no health problems.



CURLY

Curly, a female FIV, was given a home by another of our sponsors in Bristol. This photo arrived around Christmas time and shows how well she is. Curly has had no health problems and gives much pleasure to her owner.



SADIE

Sadie, diagnosed FeLV positive on a first test, and later negative on the second three months later was homed to a friend we call the "Catwork outpost", as Claire has no less than five cats who have come via Catwork at different times over the years. Barbara saw Sadie and all the rest of the gang in the summer when a lovely afternoon was spent visiting. Again, they all live in cat heaven, surrounded by farmland and doted on by their owners, and thoroughly spoilt! And why not?

HEALTH ISSUES

Our work being mainly concerned with FIV and FeLV cats, makes us very aware of health issues, and we are more and more convinced that FIVs, properly looked after and with a good diet, suffer no more health problems than others, though once a problem has arisen, some FIVs can take longer to recover. Several of our cats – and actually some of the oldest – have not needed to see the vet all year! Tutts, Molly and Florence, all FIV positive and in their teens, are in remarkably good health. It is interesting that all these three also had domestic backgrounds, and would not have gone through the period of strydom with its associated poor diet. We have felt for some time that a period of poor diet suffered by most strays in early life can have long-reaching repercussions healthwise in later years - far more so than being FIV+.

Visitors to Catwork (and there have been many this year) are almost always surprised to see how fit, fat and healthy-looking the cats are.

As with humans, some cats have a tendency to a particular health problem. The following are some of the issues we have had to deal with during 2005:

Tumours / Cancers – are FIV cats more susceptible to these?

We have lost several cats to cancerous growths, some old, some young. It is difficult to know if cancers are more common with the FIV cat or not, as vets are reporting increases in cancer across the general cat population. Our house cat ginger Tom (not FIV) for example, had a tumour removed from the edge of his mouth, which was malignant, but was able to be successfully removed.



Tumours / Cancers are the great curse of the FeLV cat as two cats (Cicci & Gabriel) demonstrated, but the four we already had enjoyed a trouble-free year: Giles, Ginny, Dylan and Jordan are all extremely healthy-looking and show nothing of their underlying, usually at some stage fatal, virus.

Bruno died from a tumour

Stomatitis / Gingivitis – sore and inflamed mouth and gums - Cecil, Bruce & Jemima

This is frequently quoted as being common with FIVs, but is also becoming more prevalent in non-FIV cats generally as well. We wonder whether this is being exacerbated by poor quality cat food, full of artificial additives and colourings.

In 2004 we had three cats, Bruce, Cecil and Jemima, who suffered badly with stomatitis / gingivitis. All had major dentals to remove teeth affected by lesions, which decay the teeth below the gum line and cause much pain. This dentistry proved enormously successful for Bruce and Cecil, although Cecil needed a second op to remove more teeth, but Jemima, unfortunately, has continued to suffer all this year despite trying other treatments – steroid injections, hormone tablets, homoeopathic remedies, tissue salts and, lastly and currently, a cocktail of herbal remedies in pill form given three times a day.

Fortunately Jemima loves her food, which helps when trying the various treatments – we live in hope!

Blocked glands - Seamus

Seamus presented us with a most intractable problem of blocked anal glands. He had begun to suffer with this condition (highly unusual in cats, apparently) in 2004, but in 2005 it got very much worse and he was having to be sedated and flushed out at ever more frequent intervals.

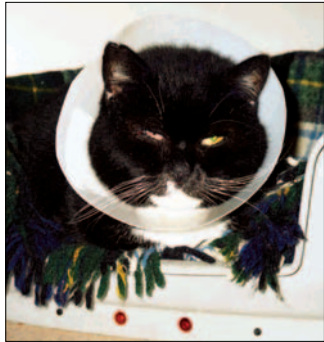
An operation was not an option because of the intricacy of it and the potential for subsequent infection. Then a homoeopathic remedy was suggested to us, together with a daily sprinkling of bran on his food, which had an almost miraculous result. Seamus has had no further blockages – a much better option than the frequent sedation/flush route – better for both Seamus and the Catwork finances!



Blocked urinary tract and eye problems – Bootsy

Poor Bootsy nearly died from his blocked bladder problem in 2004. It is caused by formation of crystals in the urine leading to a blockage – extremely painful for the cat and often fatal in a short space of time if not treated properly.

Bootsy, once unblocked, was also put on to homoeopathic remedies and a special diet and has not had a recurrence of this painful problem.



He did, however, manage to get his eyeball punctured, we are still not sure how. He is a very accident-prone little cat! Bootsy could have lost the eye, but prompt surgery and much aftercare involving the wearing of a 'bonnet' and being given eye drops four times a day while convalescing in our 'hospital bay' meant that Bootsy made a full recovery.

Bootsy with his collar while his eye healed

Heart problems – Billy

We managed to keep poor Billy, who had heart problems as well as chronic stomatitis, going for a whole year. Towards the end he was on four tablets a day. Having been the pet of a lady who died, he was used to home comforts,

and in the winter of 2004 we brought him into the house, where he enjoyed log fires during what was to be the last winter of his life. Billy had the sweetest nature and loved being part of the household. Billy's heart finally gave up in May 2005.



Billy enjoying the spring sunshine

Fatal falls – Granny

We were devastated when our sweet, very elderly, frail 'granny' injured her leg and was unable to walk.

When she came to us in 2004, she was barely able to walk due to arthritis, but she was full of spirit, and with medications she became stronger and

stronger. She would trot around, miaowing for food and attention and clamber up onto the bed for sleeps. She must have taken a fall, and she damaged the main ligament of the knee. Unfortunately there was nothing that could be done in one so frail, and she lost any quality of life, so we had to take the terrible decision to have her put to sleep. We would never have imagined that being "too active" would lead to her death.



When typing this, Bob realised that his mum too (also known as 'Granny' to very many) took a fall that led to her death – she fell and broke her hip (at age 94); although the operation to repair it was successful, she contracted pneumonia and died in hospital.

Fits – Ben

Our first experience of a fit came with little Ben who already had kidney problems. Fits can, it seems, be managed in some cases, but Ben appeared to have a stroke a few weeks after his first fit, leaving him with no quality of life, unable to see where he was going or what he was doing. Yet another heartbreaking decision had to be taken to end his suffering and put him to sleep.

Kidney problems – Ben and Davey

This is probably one of the most frequent problems of the older cat, FIV or otherwise.

A sweet little cat we called Davey found his way here having been left behind in Bristol when his owners moved! His rescuers thought he was a girl, being rather pretty, and called him Daphne!

Davey, as we renamed him, seemed to be in kidney failure almost as soon as he got here in the spring. He was diagnosed with this, put on medication and special diet to help the condition, and we managed to buy him six months enjoying a wonderful summer in the Fivory.

Reactions to medications – O'Mally

The conventional treatment for some skin conditions is a steroid jab. Occasionally, however (rare in cats, but more common in dogs, apparently), an animal will react to this, and we had one such case in O'Mally who came to us this summer. He had a skin problem but reacted to the jab by exhibiting hyperactive behaviour and drinking excessively for several weeks.

Malfunction of the Pancreas – Tabby Thomas

Again, this would seem to be a rare condition in cats, seen mainly in dogs – we do seem to have had some unusual health issues to deal with this year!

Part of the function of the pancreas is to produce the enzymes that go into the stomach to break down the food. When the pancreas is not functioning properly the result is that the food eaten is not properly digested and consequently does not ‘feed’ the animal properly. There are various symptoms that we recognised as those being shown by Tabby Thomas - a very old cat who came back to Catwork when his owner went into a home.

The treatment for the condition is to feed the enzymes, which come in the form of granules, with the food. This then enables the digestive process to operate better.

These seem to be working, although Thomas is a very fussy and strong-willed geriatric who spends most of his time at our neighbour’s house where he gets spoiled, so it is proving extremely difficult to make sure he has the medication; unfortunately, the neighbour is also strong-willed and not very co-operative!

As this medication is not cheap, and Thomas needs it twice every day, this is proving to be an ongoing problem in more ways than one.

- As we “go to press” the situation is changing: firstly, the neighbour started to play ball. but then she had a fall and broke her hip and is in hospital. Perhaps now we might be able to make some progress with TT’s digestive system.

The vexed question of booster vaccinations

In the spring, with Catwork’s dramatic drop in income due to the loss of four major sponsors, decisions had to be made as to whether it was going to be possible to continue giving annual boosters to such a large number of cats.

The financial situation, together with much reading on the whole subject of vaccinations (thought by many to be actually causing some problems) led us to decide to discontinue our policy of annual booster jabs. One element of the vaccination (the one that protects against enteritis) is recognised to have a much longer-lasting effect than the one year suggested by the drugs companies.

As all the cats have had initial vaccinations on coming to Catwork, and then only mixing with one another, this is the costly area we decided to dispense with.

Pilling tip

We thought we would share a tip we were given which has proved invaluable to us.

Obviously, with so many cats, we are frequently having to give tablets. What we do is: if the pills are large, we cut them in half, and then put them in a spoonful of Primula cheese spread that you can readily buy. It comes in tubes and is variously flavoured (our cats especially like the cream cheese and shrimp!)

You can see from the photographs, the cats literally queue up for their turn to get their worming tablet, and take it from a spoon!

Just thought some of you might like to share this tip.



WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST

Sadly, we are always encountering lack of knowledge from those who ought to know better, and an over-dependence on veterinary advice about FIV, which is not always what it should be!

There are still, tragically, many vets who are not aware of the true implications of FIV, and are all too ready to suggest putting people's pets down, let alone the unfortunate strays who may end up in their practice. Even if there is one 'informed' vet within a practice, different individual vets can have different attitudes to FIV – see Leo's story in "cats we have homed" section.

Even for the enlightened vets there is the problem of where FIV / FeLV stray cats can go, since most rescue organisations shun them.

Those who contact Catwork directly, often through the website, are those who are not happy with the 'professional' advice they have been given, and wish to find out more, both about FIV and FeLV.

With the benefit of 10 years experience (8 of which have been devoted to the care and study of FIV and FeLV cats) we feel we are in a position to share with others our observations and experiences with these misunderstood viruses.

The stray FIVs, as always, are on a hiding to nowhere when very few rescue centres will take them on. This is so sad, as the cats with FIV are often young, unneutered male cats, with potentially a long life ahead of them. Once neutered and given a territory and food source, the need to fight is removed, which is the only real way in which the FIV virus is passed on.

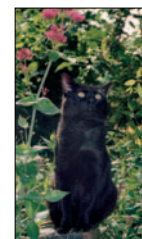
We were reminded, on more than one occasion during the year, that the major organisations are not as aware as they should be of the realities of FIV and FeLV.

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home were all set to put down little Batman even though we were offering him sanctuary: Barbara had literally to plead for his life!

Likewise with O'Mally, from RSPCA, Wales. The collection officer who had picked him up was of the opinion he should be put down, but the centre manager was happy for him to come to Catwork. O'Mally was well and truly tied up in red tape – this sort of thing should not be happening. The public imagine that when they take a stray to a rescue centre, they are "saving it". However, if the cat turns out to be FIV or FeLV, it can so often turn out to be a death sentence.

Cats that had been on 'Death Row' with the larger organisations

The following cats would have been killed if they had not come to Catwork



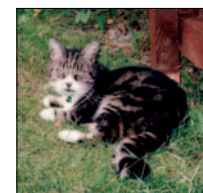
Nick
Blue Cross



Donny
RSPCA



Bruno
RSPCA



Kitty / Daisy May
RSPCA



O'Mally
RSPCA



Batty
Battersea Dogs
and Cats Home



Charlie
RSPCA
(went straight
to a home)

We have FIV cats at Catwork from RSPCA, Cats Protection, Blue Cross and Battersea, all of whom purport to rescue cats, but having these viruses seems to be used as a convenient excuse for them to be put down. Every life is worth saving, and we would be failing in our duty to animals if we do not start to challenge the big organisations about their policies.

So many animals are being put down these days – the old, the frightened, the FIVs and FeLVs – "Not enough space" is the mantra used as their excuse, but with all the funding the large organisations receive, surely they should be spending some of it on creating more spaces - rather than prestige premises? They should stop pretending they are saving lives and only putting cats down that are too ill to help, when their unpublicised policies allow them to 'select' many categories for the death sentence, more through convenience than any other reason. These organisations are also letting down many of the dedicated people who work for them and have to fight from the inside to help rescue animals from the rescue organisations!

These organisations are also letting down their supporters, in our view, many of whom have no idea that so many animals are being put down without good cause. (See next page for Barbara's poem on the subject).

As you may sense, we have reached 2006 very disillusioned with the way animal 'rescue' is going. Thank goodness that a few people (Animal Affairs, NASSL, Wessex Animal Trust) are recognising that it is often the smaller 'rescues' who end up dealing with the most difficult animals.

It has been extremely wearing and frustrating to have to work so hard to

save a life – just looking after them is hard enough without the added hassle of pleading for their lives with the “powers that be” as has happened too often this last year.

We do know that, on a personal level, through the website and talking on the phone, we have made a difference to a few, so we must cling on to that thought. To quote the motto of “Animal Affairs Charity” with which we wholeheartedly agree: “A life saved, a difference made”.

To summarise, the five basic problems we are up against are:

1. The public expect vets or rescue organisations to know about FIV and FeLV - they are frequently given very bad advice.
2. Vets within the same practice having different opinions about FIV, making for much confusion.
3. Rescue organisations using FIV and FeLV as an excuse to put cats down.
4. The unreliability factor of the in-house tests, especially for FeLV.
5. The ignorance of many rescue organisations, even those specialising in cats, about the facts and realities of FIV and FeLV.

STOP PRESS



Beau
Condemned to death
by Cats Protection

Even as we prepared this booklet, we had a call asking us to take a cat that had tested positive for FeLV on a first in-house test. Although we agreed, the vet was still ‘instructed’ by the Cats Protection group involved, to put the cat down - RULES!

The in-house FeLV test has been shown to be very unreliable by the University of Glasgow Companion Animal Diagnostics Laboratory - a veterinary diagnostic laboratory specialising in feline and canine virus infections - with more than 50% of tests proving incorrect! For this reason it is vital to have a more accurate laboratory confirmatory test done.

Even if this test comes back positive, it is still possible that the cat has only recently been infected and its immune system is in the process of dealing with the virus - most adult cats can beat the FeLV virus - so a second confirmatory test should be done three months later before you can be sure whether the cat really is permanently FeLV positive or not. Fortunately for Beau, the vet sought higher authority and won a reprieve for him and Beau came to Catwork.

We are currently waiting for the result of an initial confirmation of the first in-house test.

Conflict of Choice

In clinical capsules they wait, on show,
The reason they're here - how could they know?
Unwanted, unloved, without a home,
Some abandoned and left to roam.
The young are lucky, they stand more chance
Of getting more than a passing glance.
The old and ugly, set in their ways,
Could end up staying many days -
That's if they're lucky, since nothing's sure
And death could be lurking behind that door.
With space at a premium, staff must choose,
And some poor creature has to lose.
Will it be him or will it be her?
(If only they knew they wouldn't purr).
Too many cats - it's one of those days -
So which is the one to euthanase?

Barbara Hunt
October 2002

After a visit to an RSPCA cattery centre, and experiencing the “not enough space” attitude at first hand, Barbara came home depressed, and wrote this poem.

Note from Barbara:

Bob insisted that I included some of my poems in this booklet. I was reluctant as I only show them to a few people. One person, who happens to be a sponsor, read all my cat poems and her summing up was: "They made me laugh, they made me cry, and they made me think". I really hope that the three poems I have included here are examples of what she meant.

Note from Bob:

In the "how it all began" section, we mention that Barbara came back to the cottage in which she was brought up, in Nether Stowey – it is a little more complicated than that...

Barbara was born in the village shop, which was owned by her parents. Being a "late" child with much older siblings and busy parents, she spent much time with "Nan and Wilf", not related, but living next door to the shop, and Nan helped her parents in many ways. They were simple country folk, with qualities which were an example to all.

Barbara found the 'home next door' to be a haven where she was allowed free rein to explore her imagination as any child should. Nan and Wilf became like second parents to her, giving her the time and calm love that she needed. Barbara's access to this haven was through a gap in the hedge between the shop and Nan and Wilf's garden.

It is this 'second home' that is now our home; her childhood haven has become a haven for many creatures in need of care and love – a dream come true!

Later in life, Barbara has written poetry to express her feelings and, understandably, many feature cats as the subject. The poem on the following page shows her childhood imagination in full swing, back at a time when she could not have imagined what this place now holds.

The simple box in front of the fire in the kitchen became whatever she wanted, accompanied, of course, by a cat – the joys of a childhood mind.

I mention this by way of explanation that 'here' is very much more than what is currently here; it holds a lifetime of dreams and aspirations, now hopefully, in part coming to fruition.

Cat in the Box

The gap in the hedge was the gateway for me
To the best of all places where I loved to be:
Past black, red and white currants, all in a row,
I hurried along, hoping no one would know.
With everyone busy and no time to spare,
They just might not notice that I wasn't there.
I passed fruit and veg and the pig in her sty -
She just gave a grunt and then turned a blind eye.
The gap was my passport into a dear land,
Where all afternoon I could do what I'd planned.

I'd sit in my box and sail right out to sea
With the large ginger tom who accompanied me.
I was the captain and he was my mate -
The adventures we had there in front of the grate !
The places we saw and the things that we did;
When the going got rough, we just lay down and hid.

One time we went off in our box - a fast car;
We headed for London - it seemed very far,
The queen was impressed when Tom frightened a mouse
Right under her chair in her very posh house.

In our own flying saucer we got to the stars,
Stopping off at a planet that could have been Mars.
It was so red and fiery and gave off so much heat,
We didn't much like it, so beat a retreat !

Our submarine box took us down in the sea,
The jewel-like fish swam all round Tom and me.
And then we caught sight of a vision so rare -
A beautiful mermaid just combing her hair !

Sometimes we'd play zoos, and the cat was for me
Whatever wild creature I asked him to be.
As king of the beasts he would offer a paw,
Then toss his great mane and purr such a loud roar.

Sometimes we'd play shops as we sat in the box;
One day at the barber's I cut off Tom's locks !
He looked very strange, but did not make a fuss,
He really was such a good sport that old puss !

When playtime was over we'd sit down to tea -
Some sardines for Tom and fish fingers for me.
I'd go through the hedge at the end of the day,
Leaving, sadly, the one place I wanted to stay.

The cat and the box are now faraway dreams
But life is as unreal as ever, it seems !

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

As 2005 saw Catwork clock up its tenth year of catworking, we thought we would give you a little introduction of how it all came about.

It all began in a shoe shop!

Barbara grew up surrounded by animals her father kept rescuing (including an orphaned deer). Cats were her favourite animal and she can't remember a time without one.

When Barbara and Bob were living in Burnham-on-Sea with just the two Burmese, Bill and Ben, Barbara overheard a conversation in a shoe shop about a difficult Siamese that was going to have to be put to sleep as the owner could not take it into her new accommodation. Barbara offered to help. Carly, the Siamese, was taken to a specialised rescue in Gloucestershire which Barbara found, and remained there as a house cat for the rest of her days. – The seeds of rescue had been planted!

When we came to live at Nether Stowey, Barbara's birthplace, and back into the very cottage in which she had grown up, the odd cat casualty began finding its way to us, and we purchased a large chalet and sited it in our large garden; this was ten years ago.

One thing led to another, or rather, one cat led to another.

The first two years of Catwork were mostly rescue and rehome, though even in the early days a few "special needs" cats turned up and stayed. One such was Millie, given much coverage in the booklet, who would have been almost impossible to rehome as she was so terrified of everything. Millie remained with us and was the inspiration behind the Catwork logo.

What happened here at Catwork was, and still is, dictated by the needs of the cats who come here. We could never have anticipated those needs and planned what has become the sanctuary today. Each special needs cat that arrived seemed to need some further development of the sanctuary to cater for it; this is how it has become what it is today.

During those early days, a few individual cats had a major influence, that changed the way Catwork developed; these individuals feature large in our memories:

Bertie, an elderly ginger cat who had been brought to Exmoor during the making of a film, or television production, was simply left behind when the filming was over! Sadly, Bertie had to survive on handouts from the locals for quite some time before he was brought to our attention by a cat-loving lady, who had noticed our advertisements in the local paper, seeking homes for rescued cats.



Bertie's rescue was quite dramatic – not knowing his rescuers, we arranged to meet by the church, we didn't wear red carnations, but we did swap car makes and colours. We needn't have worried, there was no one else at the church! It was a fearfully cold February day when Bertie was hauled up a very steep valley in a hamper and handed over to us at the top. It was all somewhat "cloak and dagger" as, although no one would give Bertie a home, the locals had got used to him being there – Exmoor can be pretty bleak for wild animals, let alone a domestic cat; especially so in February!

Bertie's stay with us was all too brief, as he died a few months later, but he really enjoyed his bed and regular meals.

Barbara knew that Bertie was just the sort of cat she needed to be helping, the ones forgotten and poorly cared-for, or shunned in some way.

Georgie, was a little black cat who came to live in the home. She always had so many health problems, but was such a strong character! Georgie inhabited the upstairs and would come to the top of the stairs and shout loudly when she thought it was time for food – like a little old lady demanding to be attended to!



Georgie was quite frail, and might venture out into the garden for a few minutes on nice days, but spent nearly all her time either sharing Bob's chair in the office, or sleeping in her bed. Imagine our astonishment when one day we saw her walking on top of the 10 ft high wall beside our garden! To this day we don't know how she managed it, but Bob rushed to get a ladder to bring her down again – she was not amused!

Given a maximum of three months to live by our vet because of recurring mammary cancers, Georgie defied them and lived a full year after her prescribed limit. Some of you may remember her featuring with this photo on a Catwork Christmas card. This was taken on Christmas Day, just a few weeks before she died, leaving a huge hole in our lives.



Sandy. Barbara was at the vet's one morning when a couple brought in a dear old cat. When asked what was wrong with him, they said "nothing", he was their mother's cat, she had gone into a home and he was surplus to requirements and they'd come to have him put down! Barbara pleaded with them not to do it, and that she would give him a home; she spent an anxious few minutes pacing the floor outside the consulting room where they discussed the alternatives with the vet.

No one could see why Barbara should not take him, so Sandy came across the road to Catwork where he spent another two years. He was a lovely old cat and much loved.



Peggy has to be the rescue that not many people would have thought stood a chance – found blind and three-legged, dumped outside a disability centre! (we really do wonder about some of the human race!) She was, again, a cat of tremendous character and coped extremely well on her three legs. Her only front leg appeared almost central, like a peg – hence her name.

Peggy found a couple of years of happiness with a cat-loving friend of Barbara's who had a houseful of rescues already, including another blind cat with whom Peggy shared a chalet in the garden on days when it was warm enough to go outside. In the home, she had her own little "safe" area, and was much loved.

The accommodation at Catwork was beginning to expand as the cat numbers grew. People needing help for cats came into our lives, including Mrs Pope, who died last year. Having got to know us through some individual cats, Mrs Pope continued her generosity to Catwork until she died.

Others came along who gave us substantial donations, which enabled us to build more accommodation, which always quickly filled up!

When Harry, our first terrified FIV (see 'those who left us' section), came into our lives, he changed the whole direction of Catwork and our lives. Other FIV cats came along and from knowing nothing at all about the condition, eight years later, and many FIV cats later, we feel we are beginning to know a bit; enough to know, anyway, that FIV is nothing like the problem people think it is: it is more the perception of FIV that is the problem. The cats with the virus aren't that dangerous to other cats unless they are fighters by temperament, which very few are. Unneutered stays are more likely to fight, over food, females and territory, but once neutered and given a good food source, cats rarely fight.

Harry was our first FIV who was also very frightened. It took two or three months to even touch him, yet he grew into the sweetest, most affectionate cat.

An article we wrote in the local paper about FIV and Catwork led to the sponsorship idea. Mr Davies "adopted" Harry, his "god cat" and sponsorship at Catwork was born. As Catwork is just the two of us, and Bob also has to run his business, we are unable to do the usual fund-raising activities; sponsorship has therefore become the method by which our work can proceed. Being able to rely on a known amount each month enables us to plan what can be done, and we have the added benefit of our sponsors becoming well known to us and visiting, so Catwork is very personal. As the FIV cats are almost never homed, we get to know them all extremely well, and our sponsors get to know them too.

Since Harry's arrival at Catwork, we have put our energies into helping FIV and FeLV cats, plus a few special needs cats, who are not homeable. Whatever their status, they all have a right to life, and we feel very privileged that we have been able to help just a few over the last ten years.

The next few pages feature our household cats.

Although not part of the Catwork sanctuary, with the exception of William and Benjamin, the Burmese, all are rescues who, for different reasons, have stayed with us in the house; some needed to be here, others we just couldn't part with - either way, they became our pets.

THE HOUSE CATS



WILLIAM and BENJAMIN (Bill & Ben)

Bill and Ben, our Burmese brothers, pre-date all the other cats and even Catwork itself. We had Willy and Ben before we moved “home” to Nether Stowey, they are now 15 years old. Considering their age, they are still very sprightly and enjoy a game, though like most older cats, spend most of their time sleeping.



William



Ben

Ben is the bigger of the two and is a real “baby”, any form of veterinary treatment is a nightmare. He once needed an operation on his ear (which remains ‘bent’ to this day) and had to wear a protective collar for weeks; we never thought he would survive the ordeal, he made such a fuss!

William is the “mischief” and can open the fridge as we discovered on our first Christmas here and found the joint in bits on the kitchen floor one morning! Ever since, we have needed a child lock on the fridge.

Burmese are known for never growing up and are great characters; they love people and are very fond of each other, often curling up together.



MILLIE

Millie was one of the very first cats we rescued back in 1996. She was brought to us in a trap, very frightened at the age of about 6 months.

For two months, Millie hid behind a bale of straw in the only chalet we had at the time. Gradually she learnt to trust us and we brought her into the house from where she has hardly ventured since. Even a very rare trip across the road to the vet is a traumatic experience for her, and for Barbara!

Millie, so named because she was brought to “Mill View”, the name of our house, was the inspiration for the Catwork logo. Millie grew into a sweet-natured cat, still a bit nervous, very affectionate, and the matriarch of the household, keeping all the other cats in their place.

She is particularly sensitive to Barbara’s moods and gets quite agitated when she is upset.



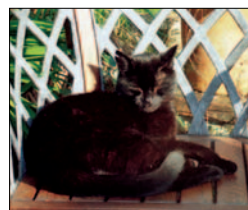
GINGER TOM

Ginger Tom also came to us in the very early days, shortly after Millie. He had been taken in as a very scruffy stray to a Taunton vet; he was aged approximately two years. All the local shelters were full and no one could take Thomas. We collected him and brought him to Catwork and treated his eyes and ears and fattened him up.

He has always been full of character, and quite impressive-looking being large, fluffy, ginger and white. Needless to say, he soon joined us in the house.

Some time later, Barbara did a talk in a primary school about the cats at Catwok and Ginger Tom was chosen to be taken along to illustrate the talk – Tom had other ideas, and on the morning of the talk, we learned that Tom was quite capable of getting out of a cat flap that was locked as “in only”! Fortunately, he returned in time to go to school, and thoroughly enjoyed all the attention.

All the other house cats hold Ginger Tom in great respect, and love to sniff his fluffy tail which seems to be an endless source of fascination to them.



BILLY

Billy came to us as a young rescue, absolutely terrified; he had been hiding under a shed in Watchet and popping into a nearby house to cadge some cat food.

Soon after we had taken him in he made a bid for freedom, managing to squeeze through some trellis (he was small and thin then). Barbara managed to grab hold of him and with Bob’s help he was returned to his pen, but not before he had given both of us some serious bite wounds – a day we will remember, especially as it was also Bob’s birthday!

Billy soon realised where he was well off, and with the help of another older cat in the same pen, he calmed down and ended up choosing to move into the house, where he now loves to sleep on the sofa with Millie. He still disappears as soon as he hears the doorbell, but reappears again within seconds of the door closing when the visitor leaves.

Billy is very sweet natured and loves all the other cats, and Barnaby, the rescued rabbit.



MARMADUKE

Marmaduke, found on the village by-pass at the age of about 8 weeks, unable to walk due to a broken leg, is now more than three years old. He has grown up into a strikingly handsome striped ginger whose leg doesn't seem to bother him at all, although he still sits awkwardly.



Millie shows the way down

Marmaduke even had a go at climbing a small tree in the summer but got a bit worried about the descent – Millie went up the tree to see if she could help show him the way down!

Marmaduke is a quiet, loving cat although quite naughty and only likes to eat the things he steals! Shredded pouches have been found under beds after they had disappeared, but a pouch emptied into his dish would be left: he is definitely a biscuit cat, but even then, only certain types! He has had much to endure since Jack arrived and can only put up with him for short periods.



Jack relaxes...

JACK

Jack became part of the house gang this year - see "new arrivals" section.

Having been found wandering in the village at the age of about eight weeks, we fully expected him to be reunited with a distraught owner quite quickly. Despite advertising his presence, no owner appeared, so Jack joined the household.



...before his next bout with Marmaduke

Jack is very lovable but quite a tease. Marmaduke usually gets picked on, as you can see from the sparring match taking place in the photo. We have to rescue Marmy sometimes when the going gets too much for him, poor thing!

He does live up to his name: "Jack the lad", "Jack in the box" and "Jack the Ripper" - he is extremely lively and loves tearing up almost anything he can get his paws and teeth on!



Jack, as you can imagine, has lots of toys, but his favourite is a 'freebie' plastic spider which he delights in tossing about and pouncing on.

BARNABY



Barnaby and Billy - best of friends

Barbara always has to have a rabbit; she says it is a change from all those cats. Barnaby came from a rabbit rescue centre where he had spent a very long time because of being big and black and not all that pretty! He had been homed as a cute little rabbit, but had been handed back when he grew up. Being suckers for the unwanted, we had to take him. He turned out to be a lovely character and the cleanest rabbit we've ever known. He has a large hutch set in an enclosure in full view of the kitchen window. The house cats all seem to like Barnaby, and he often runs to greet them when they pass his enclosure. Billy, one of the house cats, is his special friend.

We had the surprise of our lives one day looking out to see Barnaby on the roof of his hutch! We think he must have used a large flower pot as a launch pad - we've moved it since!



I bet the view's better from up there..



...and I can reach the passion flower too!

W E B S I T E R E S P O N S E S

Our website seems to be proving helpful to many. Throughout the year we had numerous emails from different parts of the world, from people who found our website thanks to Google (it seems that various combinations of “FIV” “cats” and “Sanctuary” bring up our site in the top few).

Often the scenario is that their vet has dropped the bombshell that their beloved pet has tested positive for FIV. Understandably, the pet-owner is devastated, particularly as many vets give a completely false idea of what FIV means to them, several actually recommending euthanasia for perfectly healthy pets!

We do what we can to explain the facts and realities about the virus. What we are careful not to do, is give anything that can be construed as veterinary advice, although many ask for it. What we can do, however, is tell what we have learnt through the years of specialising in cats with these viruses.

Many kindly say that we have helped them, either simply with the information on the site or, frequently through responding by email to their questions.

One email received on the morning that Bob typed this, was from Australia, and started “Thank god for your website”. We are pleased that it can help.

Many of the requests come from the States and, due to the time difference, the emails are waiting when Bob starts the computer in the morning; so he frequently spends the first hour of the day trying to reassure someone on the other side of the world that FIV is not as bad as they have been told.



Candy's kittens (in Florida), 'RJ', at the back, tested positive, the others negative.

One particularly interesting email was a request from a lady in Florida, Candy, with three rescued young feral kittens, only one of whom tested positive for FIV. Most vets in her area gave the usual advice (to put it down, or at least keep it separate!) but she wanted other opinions.

It is always difficult with kittens, as when they are born to an FIV positive mother, they will inherit antibodies from her, but not usually the virus. It is the

antibodies that the mother had created in response to her virus and passed to her kittens. It is these antibodies the tests look for, so a positive test in a kitten is usually not accurate for the virus and, after a few weeks, the kittens will lose their mother's antibodies and then test negative.

However after repeated tests, this one kitten, known as “RJ”, still tested positive – it looks increasingly likely that this was one of the unusual cases of the virus itself being passed from mother to kitten. Having patiently tamed them, Candy has no intention of doing anything other than keeping all three kittens living as normal together. She has even patiently introduced the three kittens to their existing cat, having taken on board the realities of FIV - three very lucky kittens! It will be interesting to see if, over the years, there is any difference in the health of RJ against the negative two.

Candy is happy to keep us informed, and also very generously sent us a handsome donation (she did also kindly say that she had learned more about FIV from a couple of emails from us than she had from many conversations with several vets over a couple of weeks!)

The Internet also enables us to be in touch with others who have FIV cats, many of whom have them living together with non-FIV cats for many years without the virus being transmitted. This enables us to give more reassurance to those who have been told that they have to separate their FIV from others, often cats who have been living happily together for years. It never ceases to amaze us how much rubbish is talked about FIV, causing so much unnecessary heartache.

It is good to know that the website can be a vehicle to help people and cats across the world, but, unfortunately, there are many who have been so frightened by the false scare stories put about, often by vets and other rescue organisations, that they find it hard to accept our advice and reassurance, so we realise that we can't win them all!

We are acutely aware that our website needs updating - one more important task for 2006!

WHAT NEXT?

At the end of the 2004 diary we spoke of trying to home some of the younger FIV cats. This did not happen – we feel it is a risky business homing any cat, but particularly one with FIV with all the prejudices and misconceptions attached to the virus. The problem comes when the cat needs to see a vet who can influence their clients so much. As already mentioned, some vets have a real problem dealing with FIV cats, others do not. So we remain full to bursting and will only consider homing an FIV cat locally where we can keep an eye on the situation and be in touch with the owner.

As for our other aims of spreading the word through the web and literature, this is working better now. Bob is answering emails several times a week from worried owners seeking to know more about the problems of living with an FIV cat. Many emails come from the States.

Our work also seems to have inspired others – a great plus. Two people in different parts of the country have expressed an interest and desire to help FIV cats and are visiting the sanctuary to pick our brains (if we still have any) and see the set-up in the garden and how the cats live. Great news! With a few more people beginning to take a stand, many more cats will be saved.