



THE CATWORK YEAR

2011

BIG BOY

our front cover cat this year

Big Boy is this year's front cover cat. We chose him because he had a difficult year in 2011, coping with a major dental and very serious eye problem, which could have resulted in him losing the eye. Fortunately this didn't happen, thanks to much intensive treatment and constant supervision by our vets.

Throughout several weeks of us putting drops in his eye - at one period, six times a day - Big Boy remained good tempered and uncomplaining. What a star!

We took Big Boy on from CLAWS rescue in Berkshire, which we have got to know quite well. For some reason they were having difficulty finding a home, and poor Big Boy was becoming quite stressed in rescue, pulling his fur out.

Once he came to Catwork, Big Boy seemed to love the garden and fresh air, quickly becoming one of the gang.

He really is a super cat and a great favourite with visitors.

After his unfortunate experiences in 2011, Big Boy is back to his old self and looks as handsome as ever.



The Catwork Year 2011

2011 was a very busy year for us on many fronts: arrivals, as usual, of various new cats, more building work and the writing of our book on FIV, based on our experience of caring for 80 FIV cats and what they have taught us these past fifteen years about the virus.

The book idea turned into a much bigger project than we had first thought, but well worth it, as now the 'real facts' are out there and, hopefully, with this ammunition hearts and minds can be changed and more FIV lives saved.

At the start of 2011 the country was still in the grip of the big freeze and it was hard going looking after the cats in such conditions. They huddled together in their chalets and their heating remained on permanently until winter finally loosened its grip.

Spring arrived, the visitors began visiting and new cats started to find their way to Catwork.

Barbara had a lovely weekend break in the gloriously warm month of April, staying with old friends Maureen and Ray in Sussex. It was during this visit that Maureen asked if Catwork would like a stand at the Animal Charities Fair in London, in the autumn. We realised that this would provide the ideal launch target for the FIV book that we had felt we should write for years, but never quite got around to. So the commitment was made – all we needed to do then was write it, before autumn!

This visit was followed by a short poetry course, making April pretty full on for Bob back at base.

Summer was busy with new cats, especially young FeLVs, so adaptations had to be made to accommodate them all.

Autumn saw us frantically trying to complete the FIV book and get it printed for the launch at the Animal Charities Fair on November 6th. Barbara stayed, for the second time that year, with friends Maureen and Ray, who played a huge part in organising the event and, on the day itself, ran the tombola while Barbara talked to people on the subject of FIV. The day was very successful inasmuch as a great deal of interest was shown in the subject of FIV and we realised just how much need there is for a 'plain man's guide' to the virus.

At the time of writing, we are on a second print run and the book has gone to individuals and rescues around the country and beyond.

Late autumn saw a return of the builders and ideas began to form for an extension at the back of the cottage for a utility area. The exciting thing was that, as the area where stood an old loo and stone shed was cleared, we realised what a large usable space we had. Barbara began to see that what had been a bit of a pipe dream for the geriatric unit might actually be possible.



Carol introduces the cats to granddaughter Chloe



Carol and Dave and the "chicken fest"



Granddaughters Megan and Rebecca visit the Fivory



Stan and Dot enjoy being with the cats as much as the cats do!



Sponsors Roger and Viv pay Catwork a visit



Dorinda, in her element with some of the Fivory cats

At the time of writing, construction is well under way and what, it would seem, used to be a pigsty in olden days, is being turned into a lovely room for oldies, leading on to a sunny outside area.

Late November saw us celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary – that's why we have to think about the oldies for the future and not the young FIVs who can live well into their teens.

Then it was downhill to Christmas and the annual amazement of the cards and donations we receive from friends old and new. Thanks to the work we do for the cats, we meet so many lovely people who enable us to go on with what we do.

Once again a huge thank you to all our regular sponsors and to everyone who has donated in any way to help us with the care of the cats throughout the year.

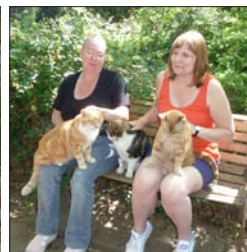
Thanks, yet again, to our friend Lisa who did another tombola for Catwork at Christmas time. Thanks for ongoing support from Animal Affairs charity shop in Bristol; also the cat clubs from their charity funds and Portishead Spiritualist Church charity fund.



Friend Lisa brings treats for the gang



Liz and Zoe pay another visit



Liz and Jayne come to see Charlie and the Fivory cats



Judith and Eric, poetry friends, visit the Fivory



Shell and Al, all the way from Stoke on Trent, having brought their rescue, Sam



Lisa and daughter Amelia bring their cat Tyson to stay, and visit the cats while here

The Dennis sisters in Berkshire continued to send blankets and donations. Albert Street Vet Clinic in Saltash still collects for Thomas and friends with a box on the counter.

Bob from Taunton still supplies us with wood shavings for the outdoor litter trays.

Ongoing thanks to Moira in Leicester who fosters Oscar for us, Sue in Minehead who looks after Brandy, and Pete who took on elderly Fluff over a year ago when his owner died suddenly.

Thanks again to Claire, who we refer to as the Catwork Outpost, having taken on numerous cats from Catwork over the years. In 2011 Claire gave a home to Joey (see New Arrivals) who had tested positive for leukaemia on a snap test at a vets in Wiltshire, but later laboratory tests showed him to be negative. He has been a very lucky cat to have escaped being put to sleep (as many FeLVs are, simply on a snap test) and to have ended up with such a great home.

Joey, Claire tells us, was at home from day one and is enjoying a wonderful life.



Moira from Leicester, who fosters Oscar, pays a visit



Mary and Kirsty on their annual visit, smothered in cats, again



Sara and Viv meet the Fivory gang



Steve gets mugged by Jasper



Jayne brings son Nathan and daughter Michelle to see Charlie



Old friend Sarah pays a visit

Special thanks to Maureen and Ray who encouraged us with the writing of the book, organised the stalls at the London venue and ran the tombola on the day itself, while Barbara dealt with the FIV enquiries. The November 6th Animal Charities Fair supplied the deadline for us to have the book done by. Thanks also to Maureen, Ray, Moira and Dorinda for proof reading and giving feedback in the later stages. So far the book has been well received and when we get some emails saying, as they sometimes do, that the book saved their cat's life, then we know it has been a job well worth doing. The task now is to get those with more entrenched views on FIV to read the information and become more open to the idea that they may just have got it wrong – it isn't the deadly virus it's been made out to be.

Thanks again this year to our great builders, Rick and Gary, who are brilliant at shutting doors while at work to prevent the housecats escaping out of the front of the cottage - they're not bad at building, either! They are making a great job of creating a building, seemingly out of nowhere, that fits in so well with the character of the cottage, to provide the utility and cats' rooms.



Bernie cuddles her sponsor cat, Captain



Claire (Catwork outpost) on a 'home from home' visit



Barbara's daughter Dora with partner Ben and Harry and Elliott



Judy gets to know her sponsor cat, Bertie



Dorinda and Steve come to visit their rescue, Charlie



Annie with sponsored cat, Cecil

Our usual thanks go to the vets, nurses and all the staff at the Quantock Veterinary Hospital. We are especially grateful to them for collecting together and printing out all the cats' vet notes from the very beginning, over 15 years ago, so we could formulate a meaningful table of the health histories for each and every cat we have had in the sanctuary. The results have been a surprise to many, as they show just how few problems they have had despite being FIV, thus providing the vital evidence we needed for the book, that FIV does not make the difference to a cat's health that many believe.

Also, instead of the staff at the hospital sending each other cards at Christmas, they decided to donate the money they would have spent on the cards to Catwork!

Not only that, but we were also given the proceeds of their calendar sales featuring all the "pets of the month" throughout the year. All in all the vets and staff did us really proud in 2011, thank you so much.



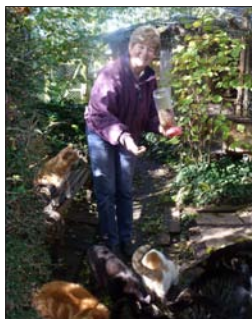
The Bristol gang: Sara, Annie, Lyn and Lorna



Our Gloucester friends and supporters, Adele, Kath and Jean



Sara with sponsored cat, Donny



Gill pays a visit to see the cats she's long loved and read about



Lesley visits her rescue, Bear

On behalf of all the cats a huge thank you to everyone who supports Catwork in so many ways.

As always, we got involved, throughout the year, with people at the end of an email or phone, seeking advice and moral support for their FIV cats.

We were pleased to be able to help a cat called Simon, up north. The couple who had been feeding him as a stray, realised he should be neutered and sought help from their local Cats Protection group. They were told they would only pay for the neutering if the cat was first blood tested – if positive for FIV he would be put to sleep. Simon's rescuers were having none of that, and so, not wanting to put Simon's life in danger, they put a posting on the CatChat Forum, seeking help and advice. Catwork agreed to pay for the blood test; if positive we would take him, if negative he could be homed – he was definitely not going to be put to sleep.

What are some Cats Protection groups about? The name implies they “protect”, not “select” which cats to help and which to kill.

Happily Simon, despite being a stray, tested negative and has since decided to move in with his rescuers and their several cats.

In the summer, amazingly, we had a spare chalet for just a week or so, which coincided with friend Lisa's taking a well-earned holiday. To help out, we said we would look after her elderly cat, Tyson. Having had no illness to speak of all his life, would you believe it that after a couple of days, Tyson had a fit! The poor old chap was hospitalised and tests done to eliminate various things, but nothing significant could be found.



Simon



Tyson

His worried owner, when Barbara was eventually able to contact her, was, of course, most upset, but by then Tyson was back at Catwork. Barbara was pleased when he was safely back in his own home – such a responsibility looking after someone else’s pet.

Tyson has not had a recurrence of the fitting, and is still doing well in his twenties!

We got involved with an elderly cat, Annie, who had escaped from her basket on the way to the vet, just across the road from us. She had been missing for some time before we knew about her, and it was when we were asked to lend our trap that we became involved. The neighbours on the other side of the road allowed us to put the trap in various places in their gardens, but, without a sighting, we didn’t know the best location to try.

Three weeks after the poor nervous cat had escaped, one of the neighbours said he thought he had seen her run across the car park opposite. There was a gap under the gate at the end of the car park, big enough for a small cat to get under, so we started putting food in the garden behind the gate. For several nights in a row, the food disappeared, so we hoped we were on to something. The neighbours didn’t have cats and their gardens were very self-contained, so there was a good chance it was little Annie taking the food.

After several nights establishing a feeding pattern in the same place, we put the food in the trap and, when we checked it just before dark,



Annie, safe in the pen, waiting to be collected by her owner

there was a little cat answering Annie's description sitting in the trap. Back at home, we transferred the little cat from the trap into a pen set up in the kitchen where she ate some more food and settled down for the night. Amazingly she didn't look any the worse for her three week ordeal!

Next morning Annie's owner came up to identify her and was, needless to say, overjoyed, thinking she would never see her again.

The nice twist to the story is that Annie turned out to be the very first cat Barbara had homed in the village. When the person Annie was homed to had died, the neighbour took her on, and that's why Barbara had not realised who the cat was. Memories came flooding back – Barbara had rescued her from a flat where she had been left behind, called her Annie (it being some anniversary that day) and homed her to a lady in the village with whom she spent many happy years until she died, then Annie moved next door.

Such a happy end to the story of the little cat whom Barbara rescued twice!

At the end of 2011, Catwork sanctuary was home to 20 FIV cats, 4 FeLVs and 2 special needs. Our personal cats numbered 7 plus 1 rabbit.

NEW ARRIVALS IN 2011



GEORGE (FIV)

George was our first FIV rescue of 2011. We had been saying we wanted to concentrate on the older special needs cats, who would stand very little chance of help in mainstream rescue. George certainly fitted the bill, being blind, black, FIV positive and getting on in years.

We were asked if we could help by our rescue friends in Berkshire at whose vets he had found himself.

In spring we collected him from Berkshire. We called him George because of his disabilities, as the talk at the time was about the film “The King’s Speech”, in which King George overcame his impediments.

George adapted to life in the sanctuary very well after his initial confusion and nervousness. He soon found his way around his own special area in the Fivory, amongst, but separate from, the other cats.

George is a lovely old boy who likes his food and fusses. We’re very pleased to have been able to give him the help he so much deserves.



CHARLIE (FeLV)

A call came through late one evening from a distraught lady in the Midlands who had been feeding a stray which turned out to be FeLV positive.

After many phone calls to try and get him into rescue, Catwork was mentioned by a group who knew that we have always done work with leukaemia cats.

Dorinda, the cat's rescuer, was

overjoyed when we agreed to take him, and, soon after, brought him down to Somerset.

Charlie's name came immediately to us as his little moustache reminded us of Charlie Chaplin. Charlie had found a place of safety, and we made some new friends.

He quickly settled in and, except for a cough which the vet thinks was lungworm, he has been fit and well.

TOBY (FIV)

We were alerted to Toby's plight in 2011 in an email from a friend who'd been contacted for help, as Toby was literally on 'death row' at a 'rescue' in Southampton, run by a lady who was completely ignorant about the facts of FIV and in the habit of having all her FIV rescues put down.

We were desperately trying not to take on any young FIV cats, knowing

how long they can potentially live, with our own age creeping ever upwards! However, we could not stand by and let this very young cat in good health be put down, so he ended up with us in the sanctuary.

The name 'Toby' was given him as a pun on the famous Shakespeare quote "To be or not to be", as his young life had been very much in the balance.

Toby, with all the confidence of youth, has been quite challenging, wanting to test his mettle against the older cats. He seems to have been put in his place at last by the older, more confident cats who won't put up with his nonsense. Toby is quite a long way down the pecking order!





SAM (FIV)

This frightened little cat came all the way from Stoke-on-Trent in summer, 2011. He had been rescued when he was literally at death's door, skinny, crawling with ticks, lice and fleas, and with untreated injuries incurred while trying to survive.

Sam's rescuer refused to give up on him even though the vet thought he wouldn't survive. Amazingly, someone in her area knew of Catwork, and we agreed to take him on when he was sufficiently recovered.

Sam stayed in his rescuer Shell's spare bedroom. We sent a Bach flower remedy to address his fears, which worked a treat.

After some weeks, Sam was becoming more confident, his wounds had healed, so a date was set for the journey down to Somerset. Shell and friend stayed the weekend to settle Sam in, then it was over to us.

Several months later, Sam is hardly recognisable as the frightened cat who came - he is looking great, having put on weight and grown unbelievably in confidence.

It just goes to show how well FIVcats can do given the right chance. Sam is now a fully paid up member of the 'garden gang'.



MR MOG (FIV)

Mr Mog came from a Bristol rescue in 2011, where he had been for quite some time with little prospect of getting a home.

Feeling sorry for him, we agreed to take him. At first he seemed quite traumatised and we thought we were in for a difficult time. Being a large cat, we thought he would not be able to get down behind the chalet, but we were wrong, and he spent the first 24 hours wedged behind. We had to dismantle the

shelving beside the chalet to get to him and coax him out.

Luckily it didn't take long to win his confidence. His name came about because he had been rescued by "The Mogger", and we thought Mr Mog suited him.

He is now in the swing of things and turned out to be a very sweet cat who likes to rush around the Fivory garden enjoying the freedom and fresh air.

BONNY & BELLA (FeLV)

Two of the prettiest and good natured cats one could wish for found their way to Catwork from a rescue group reluctant to have them put to sleep, which is what usually happens to "rescued" FeLVs.



Young FeLVs often do not have a long life expectancy, but, in our view, that is all the more reason to give them whatever life can be theirs, especially as, until the leukaemia virus kicks in, they can be healthy and happy. The decline when it comes has always been, in our experience, very rapid.

The two cats, probably sisters, had been found abandoned in a box somewhere in Wales. Bonny was pregnant and both cats found to be FeLV positive. Both had since been spayed and they looked really well on their arrival at Catwork in the summer.

They seemed very happy to have some fresh air and a cosy chalet to share. Bella, the more up-front one, seemed to be in charge of her sister Bonny, who was a little nervous.

Summer passed and we were delighted to be able to give this delightful pair a safe place just to be.

To our great sadness, Bonny left us very quickly, before the year was out, going down over a weekend due to a chest tumour which affected her breathing. Nothing could be done for this dear little cat and we had to have her put to sleep (see 'Those who left us').



JOEY

Joey came to us as a FeLV positive, but his story is a lucky one as he turned out not to be!

Vet nurse Joanne, from a Chippenham vet, where Joey had been taken as a stray with a nasty neck wound, asked if we would help this very personable cat. We had to squeeze him in, literally, as we had no isolation area in the Felvery at the time. Bob made an area, with a sleeping compartment, within the main area where Joey

could play the waiting game while the test was done.

Joey was a whisker away from being put to sleep at the vet who tested him, just on the strength of an in-house snap test, which can throw up a false positive result, as it did in Joey's case. When Joey was given a second laboratory test for leukaemia after he came to us, he turned out to be negative. Lucky cat! So many of these cats do not have the benefit of the second test and are simply put to sleep instead.

When we went to Chippenham to collect Joey (named after his nurse rescuer), we took the opportunity of visiting a cat rescue friend we've known for years and met all her current rescues, including a batch of adorable kittens who had been abandoned! It was all Barbara could do not to slip the little black one into a pocket and take him home! (We don't get to see kittens at Catwork, so the visit was a real treat.)

We collected Joey from the vet, still with the nasty neck wound, which needed treatment for a while once we got him home.

We quickly had Joey tested for virus isolation, at Glasgow University lab, and were surprised and delighted when it came back negative!

Now we had a cat to find a home for - Joe's luck was in, as friends Claire and Bernie came on their annual visit and Joey caught Claire's eye. Claire had given a home to Sadie, the first cat we had with a false positive FeLV result. So Joey got a home at the Catwork outpost where he settled in straight away as if he had always been there.

Barbara later spent a wonderful day visiting Claire and Bernie and all their rescues, taking so many pictures the camera's battery went flat!

TOMMY (FeLV)

Little Tommy is possibly the youngest FeLV we've ever had. coming from a FIV/FeLV friendly vet.

His young age is a bit of a worry, as if Tommy was born with the leukaemia virus he may only have a short life. At the moment he is fine, bouncing around like Tigger and playing with older FeLV Charlie.

Tommy did have a blip in November when he went off his food, which was a worry, but hospitalisation and tests revealed nothing. When he came home, Tommy went back to his fun-loving self. He is a dead ringer for our house cat Marmaduke, and a real little heartbreaker.



COCO

Taking on the lovely Coco was the unintended consequence of Barbara's trip to London to launch the FIV book. Maureen and Ray, with whom Barbara stayed, had been asked by their vets to see if they could find anyone to give a home to a young cat belonging to a terminally ill client of theirs, worried about his future. This lady had rescued Coco some months earlier when he had been abandoned, and got him neutered, vaccinated and microchipped. The inevitable happened - Barbara brought Coco home with her from Eastbourne to join the house gang!



Although still only a youngster, Coco is far from small; in fact he's a big boy for his age (18 months). He lives upstairs for the most part at present as there is building work going on in the back of the house and Coco is on the nervous side. Oliver is delighted to have a playmate, even

though Coco is twice his size, and Polly now has two lads to look after. Coco's owner did in fact pass away a couple of weeks after Coco came to live with us, but we were able to send her pictures of him in his new home, so her wish for him not to go into rescue, but to go straight to a home was granted.

Coco is a super cat with an oriental look, and we're glad we were able to help him just at the right moment.



TREVOR (FIV)

Trevor found himself a stray at a vet in Southampton, where he remained some weeks while they attempted to find him a home. He is such a characterful cat that it should have been possible, but, sadly, it didn't happen. Full marks to the vet practice for keeping Trevor so long and trying so hard to place him. It seems he became quite a mascot at the vets, but he couldn't stay there for ever - Catwork got a call for help.

Trevor was neutered and microchipped and duly brought to Somerset in November.

He is quite a small cat but very muscular; he dashes about and is another one who could eat for England. Trevor loves people so it is a great shame he didn't end up in a home.

THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2011

CAPTAIN (FIV)

How sad we were to lose this old-timer who'd been with us for fourteen years, hopping round the Fivery on his three legs. We estimate him to have been 16-17 years old and in all that time he had no real illness until, towards the end of his life, he developed a cough which ultimately proved to have been the beginning of throat cancer.



Captain got his name because a lady called Cook found him in a country lane with a smashed leg which had to be amputated by our own vets. When he tested positive for FIV, Captain came to Catwork and so was one of our founder FIVs. It simply had to be Captain whose picture ended up on the front cover of our FIV book.

TIMMY (FeLV)

This sweet natured little black FeLV cat from Devon, where he'd been a stray looked after by a cat-loving family, went downhill only six months after coming to us.

Our vets tried everything to combat his illness, but the leukaemia virus is relentless and Timmy grew weak and lethargic and refused to eat.

With great sadness we had to have the dear little chap put to sleep. We had hoped to have him much longer than we did.





FIZZ (FeLV)

Our little leukaemia tortie girl who came, unusually, from an RSPCA centre when we were looking for a friend for Billy, had to be put to sleep in the summer of 2011.

The virus kicked in, as it often does with the young leukaemia cats, taking the form of chest tumours.

Fizz was able to have palliative care for a short while, but when she became disinterested in food and

everything else and was losing weight, we had to have her put to sleep.

So very sad to see such a bright little cat who used to literally "fizz" round the FeLV garden, go downhill until she was just a shadow of the little cat who had come to us eighteen months earlier.



JIM (FIV)

Jim came to us from Surrey with a fearsome reputation of being dominant and difficult.

We found him to be a real character who seemed to love it here. We're told he had once been a semi-feral who had been homed, unsuccessfully. Jim seemed to find the Fivery suited him exactly.

Poor chap did suffer from really bad mouth problems which caused us continual trips across the road to the vet, trying so many methods to combat the problem. Jim was eventually put on interferon, a natural protein that can help the immune system, and each day we would have to squirt a dose into Jim's mouth. This, for the most part, enabled him to eat reasonably.

Towards the end of his life, Jim went off his legs and we feared a stroke: however, it turned out to be a middle ear infection which was treatable.

Just as we had got Jim back to his normal self, Bob noticed a lump on

one of his back legs which we had investigated but seemed to cause him no problems in getting around. Sadly, it became apparent that the lump was getting bigger and Jim became lethargic - no longer 'the old Jim'.

Examination revealed a lump in the abdomen, so the tumour was spreading and we knew the day had come to say goodbye.

What a character! Jim is much missed and is buried beside his old friend Captain whom we lost a few months earlier.

MAY (Special Needs)

This pretty, sad, little cat was with us for years, but in all that time we were never able to forge a relationship with her. She remained frightened and aloof in a world of her own.

We were able to handle her more easily in time and, between the two of us, managed to groom her and clip her nails when necessary.



When May went blind we were more concerned than ever about her quality of life, locked in her own little world.

It is always hard to make an irreversible decision when there are no visible signs of illness, though we suspected she was having kidney problems. May ate very little and we could never tablet her, so we had to let nature take its course.

One morning we found May in a collapsed state in her bed and realised the decision had been made for us. A vet examination told us what we already knew, that she was not far from the end. Little May was put to sleep back at the hospital, about which she would hardly have known.

She is buried in the little area she occupied for so long. Such a sad little cat who had never wanted to know about people or even other cats.



BONNY (FeLV)

Bonny was the more nervous of the two sisters who came to us in the summer, for what was to be all too brief a time.

Bella and Bonny were two very pretty and sweet natured cats, but leukaemia positive.

Knowing that young FeLV positive cats may live no longer than 3-4 years, never softens the blow when it actually happens, especially as these cats can look so well externally. Yet this insidious virus

within is waiting to be triggered like a time bomb.

Bonny seemed a bit off colour one weekend, but a check up revealed nothing.

As the weekend progressed, we knew there was definitely something wrong as her breathing was becoming more rapid.

On Monday morning Bonny was back over the road and seen by the same vet who'd examined her on the Saturday morning, who could scarcely believe the difference in her.

Back at the hospital, tests revealed a tumour leaking into the chest cavity affecting Bonny's ability to breathe. With great sorrow, and to the disbelief of all, as she looked so well, we had to have this beautiful cat put to sleep to prevent her from being suffocated from within.

Sister Bella went on to play mum to the two FeLV boys for a few more months.

UPDATE ON OTHER CATWORK CATS

THE FIVs



CECIL

Cecil is now one of our oldest cats, coming to us in 2002, as a Bristol stray.

In early life, Cecil's only real problem was his bad mouth, which necessitated a very major dental. This seemed to do the trick.

Now Cecil is having old age problems - he's hyperthyroid and suffers from tummy problems (IBD) so is on medication for both and having monthly B12 injections.

Cecil remains very bright and active and is one of the sweetest natured cats we have.



DONNY

Donny is soldiering on, having suffered much before even coming to us in 2003 - a cruelty case of starvation by the owner.

Now elderly, like Cecil, he has tummy problems and is on a sensitivity diet and monthly B12 injections.

Donny is still bright and at the last check up, had even put on some weight.



BRUCE

Bruce is yet another old timer, coming to us in the early days of our work with FIVs.

Like Cecil, he had major mouth issues early on but has been fine ever since. Recent blood analysis showed that all his major organs are functioning well.

Bruce is a quiet cat who fits in with everybody else without being demanding.



BATMAN

Batty, as we call him, is the little streetwise cat we got out of Battersea Cats and Dogs home when they were still putting FIVs to sleep. (Thankfully they have learned since.)

Batty has done well here, but he can be a bit aloof and not over tolerant of the others. Batty had no health issues in 2011.



BT

Big Ted (the name also alludes to the phone call that saved him from being put to sleep one New Year) has had a problem-free life at Catwork since.

BT has a healthy appetite, is very well and mixes with all the others without problem.



WOODY

A rescue from a Gloucestershire vet, Woody has had a remarkably clean bill of health. His only problem was a limp caused by a foreign body in the pad of a back foot, so not as sinister as it at first looked.

Woody has a huge appetite and a huge following of fans who come to visit him and the others most years. They are the friends and relations of Laura who rescued him when working as a nurse at the vets.



BIG BOY

Big Boy is a lovely, cuddly, handsome cat we took from our Berkshire friends who run CLAWS, who were having difficulty finding him a home.

In 2011 he had a major dental, then, towards the end of the year, a serious eye injury (see details inside front cover). He coped with both with great patience. What a star!



JASPER

Jasper too has quite a fan club as he loves to drape himself round people's necks and have long cuddle sessions. With the other cats, however, Jasper can be a bit of a bully.

The problem Jasper had with the formation of crystals in the urine seems to have been solved by the special diet he is on.



RALPH

This characterful boss-eyed cat lives with Thomas R, as he did when they were somebody's indoor pets. He loves being out in the garden and the fresh air.

Ralph has an ongoing mouth problem - sore areas at the back of the mouth where the jaw closes.

We are currently keeping him able to eat comfortably with Ovarid tablets, half a tablet twice a week. Ovarid acts as a painkiller and we have had some success with them for cats with sore mouths.

Apart from his mouth, Ralph has had no other problems.



THOMAS (Tabby Redruth)

Thomas came, with Ralph, from an indoor home where they could no longer be looked after, through a contact with the vet practice where Thomas Cornwall came from.

Having been indoor cats for some time, Thomas and Ralph seemed to enjoy having access to fresh air and a garden environment.

Thomas enjoys very good health and has not needed to see the vet since he came in 2009.



GUY

Guy is a bit of a loner who does not like it when other cats invade his space.

Guy has been with us since Guy Fawkes weekend 2004, hence his name. He has enjoyed very good health since we took him on from Bristol and, again, not needed to see a vet.



THOMAS CORNWALL

Thomas, our lovely ginger from Cornwall, is a good natured, easy cat who is never any trouble. Vet Rob at Albert Street Clinic, Saltash, where Thomas was a stray, still collects for Thomas and friends, and his rescuers also send an annual donation - he's a very popular cat.

Apart from dental problems, Thomas enjoys good health. In 2011 he had to have his remaining teeth removed, but soon learnt to cope well with eating.



BERTIE

Bertie, the unclaimed stray found next door, who turned out to be FIV+, is a gentle cat who's never any trouble.

Unlike some of the more bossy, greedy, cats, Bertie never puts himself forward, but likes a fuss when he can get a look in. He enjoys very good health.



BEAR

Nicknamed 'Grumpy Bear', he remains somewhat aloof from both people and other cats, though he does cope with sharing a chalet overnight with Thomas and Ralph.

Bear came via Lesley, a receptionist at a vet practice in Bristol which doesn't seem as yet to have got its head around FIV and is still putting such cats to sleep. We're hoping the FIV book Lesley has been passing round will have some impact.

Bear came to Catwork in 2010 and so far has not needed to see a vet.



HARRY & BARLEY

These two big ginger/white brothers have now been with us about a year and a half. They came from Bath Cats and Dogs Home where they had been a long time waiting for a home, which was not forthcoming as they were so nervous, as well as being FIV.

When they first came to Catwork, the boys remained very wary for a long time, until they learnt they could trust us. So far they have been in their own area and not with the other FIVs in the Fivory.

At last, we feel Harry and Barley are ready to make the move up to the Fivory, but still in a contained area of their own within it initially.



This handsome pair are devoted to each other. We are hoping they will enjoy their new area in the garden and that it won't be too much of a setback, now they have finally come out of their shells.

LUCY

This sweet little tortie with face cancer who came via our own vets, made it through another year in her own little area. She still loves fusses and always likes to see visitors.

Towards the end of the year Lucy was given a 'makeover', having all the worst tufts that covered her head cut away. She looked really smart for a while, until they grew back. We know she is living on borrowed time.



DANNY (FeLV)

Danny came to us from Birmingham as leukaemia positive in the summer of 2010. So far he has enjoyed very good health; he is a well-built cat who loves his food. He's very friendly towards people, but, unfortunately, is not good with other cats, which means he has to have his own area to live in. This is a real shame as all the other FeLV cats get on well together. Maybe he will mellow with age!



SANDY (Special Needs)

Sandy is our garden cat who has her own little chalet and comes and goes as she pleases. Sandy came to us when her owner, who had rescued her, died. She was absolutely terrified for the first couple of months with us, having always been extremely nervous. Then, when she lost her fear of us, she became very bossy, but also very affectionate.



Sandy has been diagnosed with kidney problems, but is doing well on her tablets and the homoeopathic remedy eel serum, which is a wonderful kidney support.

CATWORK FOSTER CATS



OSCAR (FIV)

Maira in Leicester fosters Oscar for Catwork. He came from an animal hospital in Dorset where the policy is to put FIVs to sleep. The vet nurse had contacted us for help with Oscar but, not wanting to take on such a young cat, we put a request for him on the CatChat forum, which Maira kindly answered.

Since being with her, Oscar has become far less frightened and turned into a healthy, happy, affectionate cat who gets on well with all the other cats in Maira's household.



BRANDY

We homed Brandy in the very early days of Catwork before our work with FIVs began. He was homed to a lady in Minehead where he remained for some years, but, when the owner died, Brandy went missing. Luckily he was microchipped, so when Brandy was finally found and rescued, he could be identified. The person who found Brandy said she would like to keep him, so Sue has been fostering him for Catwork for the last few years. He is remarkably fit for his age - he must be in his late teens now. He is one of those strong-willed cats with a mind of his own.



FLUFF

This lovely old boy, taken on by friend Pete in Minehead when his owner died suddenly around Christmas 2010, has had a great year and adapted remarkably well to life in a household with three other rescue cats.

Fluff is a spirited old boy and commands the respect of his fellow felines. Considering Fluff had been an only pet for all his adult life, he

has coped with his new life amazingly well. (Pete spoils all his cats rotten, so it probably wasn't that difficult!)

Recently Fluff's eyesight has been affected due to high blood pressure, so he has been put on tablets, which help a lot, for the rest of his life.

Pete brings Fluff into our vets in Nether Stowey, so we get to see him, and he's looking great.

Cats we've helped - now in homes

MINSTREL

Minstrel was taken on by David and Trish in Bristol, who had been feeding him as a stray.

When he needed veterinary treatment they took him to their vet and, upon testing positive for FIV, could not believe that he might be put down if no one claimed him.



True to form, nobody claimed him and Catwork took him on until he was fully recovered and had been neutered. David and Trish visited Minstrel at Catwork during his stay of convalescence with us.

When fully fit, they took Minstrel back to Bristol to live with all their other rescues whom Minstrel knew from his days of straydom.

Sadly, Minstrel has lost a rear leg this year due to an accident, but we hear he is coping extremely well. It just goes to show that cats are far more at risk from random accidents than from the FIV virus.

ROGER

This characterful cat, now named Timmy, spent a short while at Catwork before being adopted by friend Marilyn in Oxford, who fell for him whilst paying us a visit.



Roger had been on death row at a vets in Cheshire because he had tested positive for FIV, but, thanks to the efforts of a determined nurse, he found his way to Catwork, being delivered all the way from Cheshire by one of our loyal supporters, called Roger! He has been a lucky cat and now enjoys a loving home.

THE HOUSE CATS



MILLIE

Barbara's special cat is still going strong, despite her increasing age (approx 17) and thyroid problem, which is being contained by daily medication.

Millie rarely goes out these days and spends much of her time sleeping. She spends the last couple of hours of the evening on Barbara's lap, getting quite annoyed if any other cat tries to get in on the act!



BILLY

Billy alarmed us greatly at the start of 2011, when he was admitted to hospital hardly able to eat or breathe.

Under anaesthetic, which was a tricky process because of the breathing problems, the vet was amazed to find an enormous polyp - the biggest she'd ever seen! Billy

had the full attention of two vets and a nurse whilst the offending obstruction was carefully removed.

All Billy knew about it subsequently was that he could, at last, breathe freely and eat with great enjoyment, which he has continued to do ever since.

Billy was proclaimed 'Pet of the month' for January 2011, which secured Barbara and Bob a place at the Pet Oscars the following January, along with all the other eleven winning pet owners. Billy also appeared on the hospital calendar as January cat. Who would have believed that the quiet, nervous Billy would become such a star?

MARMADUKE

Our naughty but nice ginger cat has been with us since a tiny kitten, brought to the door having been found on the village by-pass with a shambled leg.

The leg was able to be fixed, though Marmaduke spent much of his kittenhood in a pen for the leg to mend. He's made up for it since, however, and climbs trees

and dashes about. He's a very fussy eater and only relishes things he can pinch from the food store, and will only eat certain types of biscuit.

Always a firm favourite with visitors, Marmaduke is the official 'meet and greet' cat.



JACK

Our beautiful Jack, also brought to the door as a 'lost' kitten and never claimed was, in 2011, diagnosed with a serious heart condition. We noticed him on a couple of occasions coming in from outside and crashing out for a few minutes on the floor. Investigations were called for. Ultrasound and heart monitoring revealed a congenital heart disease where the heart muscle is greatly thickened, thereby impeding the flow of blood, causing him to crash



out after exertion. There is no cure for this condition and we have to live with the knowledge that Jack could literally just drop dead at any time - a really awful prospect.

For the moment, Jack is doing well on his medication which helps to slow down the progress of the condition. This problem, it seems, is what all would-be sports people are screened for these days, as over exertion can cause sudden death. Luckily, Jack is a bit of a couch potato and doesn't go far, which is in his favour.



POLLY

Polly is our daytime upstairs cat who likes nothing more than to bask in the sun on our bed.

When the rescued Coco (see New Arrivals) joined the house gang, her babysitting duties were increased to looking after him as well as little Oliver. In the evenings, Polly enjoys the fire in winter, and keeps an eye on what's going on. Healthwise she has had a good year.



OLIVER

Little Oliver (he's never grown much) found by the postman in a country lane and never claimed, remains a shy soul and easily scared. With us he can be quietly bossy - can't they all when they want something?

Oliver is a dear little chap who now has a new playmate in Coco who is half his age, but twice his size! They have great fun chasing each other around - at least it takes the pressure off Polly, who is in charge of both.

MR DARCY

Darcy has had a good year - eating, playing with the ball, and taking an interest in everything that goes on around him. He tries to attract the attention of passing cats, visitors and, last year, the builders. Darcy really is the friendliest of rabbits.

2011 Rant - progress is painfully slow

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Sad to say that, although much progress has been made since the early days when we began working with FIV cats, there still remain some organisations and vets who still have quite the wrong idea about the virus, and still advocate the destruction of those infected cats.

Rescue, therefore, still remains a lottery for the FIV cat and it depends on which rescue and which vet it encounters as to whether it will live or die.

Cats Protection's policy on FIV is that they should be homed as indoor and only cats, but individual groups are allowed to do their own thing; we know of plenty who are still putting them to sleep – completely unnecessarily.

RSPCA which, up to now, has always had a destruction policy for FIV cats seems to be attracting a few key people who want to give FIVs a chance, and, as some managers have requested several copies of our book, we can only hope that there will be an expanding number of RSPCA officials beginning to learn that FIV cats don't need to die.

Quite a number of vets still remain woefully ignorant about the true nature of the virus and often tell rescuers and owners that their cat should be put to sleep.

Unfortunately, most people assume their vets know what they are talking about – however, on the FIV subject, many clearly do not.

On the plus side, the Cat Chat website and forum, with an FIV section, does a great job both with good information about FIV, and helping cats whose plight is posted on the forum.

Sometimes a chain of drivers is set up to transport a cat in need of rescue right across the country to someone who will take it and thereby save its life. One such lucky cat was a feral trapped by the Cats Protection group in the Midlands, found to be positive for FIV, and sentenced to death. Postings went up on the Cat Chat forum and

a FIV-friendly rescue in Norfolk offered to take him as they had facilities for ferals. His rescue involved a Christmas stop-over at our Oscar's foster mum in Leicester, Moira, who took him part way for the next stage of his journey, transferring him to the last person in the chain who took him the last stage of the trip to his place of safety. Let's hope he can be brought round by those wonderful people who deal with ferals. Often so-called ferals and just plain terrified by what they have experienced at the hand of man.

Leukaemia (FeLV)

Sadly, things have not changed much for those cats who test positive for leukaemia when rescued. They are mostly put to sleep on the result of the first snap test at the vets, which can give a false positive result, as in the case of Joey (see New Arrivals).

Even a cat who has tested positive for leukaemia on both the snap test and a lab test, should be retested after three months, as cats can deal with the leukaemia virus and not be permanently infected.

Those cats who are infected, we feel, should still have what life they can. The end usually comes quickly for a leukaemia sufferer, but until the virus kicks in they can be perfectly healthy and live happy lives. Why deny them even a short life? If we always kill them on a positive test how on earth will we learn any more about their potential?

There are not enough facilities for any of the cats who are thought to be difficult, as everything seems to be geared up for the business of homing, and little thought is given for them to have what life they can; they are simply disposed of! We need sanctuaries where difficult cats, not that homeable, can live out their lives whether they be FIV, FeLV, feral or just plain old.

So, to sum up, "rescue" remains a perilous business for difficult cats in need of help, and so many are still being betrayed by those who purport to save them. We desperately hope that our experiences of FIV cats, now documented in the book, will help many more have the life that is their right.

RESCUED... to die!

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

Note: Barbara wrote this poem about a particular cat. It is a true story, and similar events happen all too frequently.

Fortunately, in this particular case, we were made aware of the situation and were able to give sanctuary to "Toby", as we called him (see New Arrivals). Sadly, there are many other cases where the outcome is as bad as the poem suggests!

Our book - 80 FIV cats and what they have taught us

Over the years we have added much of what we have learnt to our website, but it has always been a little piecemeal. We know that people who find the website seem to appreciate the information there, and each time we produce one of our yearbooks we say to ourselves, "we really must put everything we have learned about FIV into a real book that we can send to the people who need to know" - but until now, each year it has been no more than an expression of a wish. This year, we actually did it!

It all came about when our friends Maureen and Ray in Sussex asked if we would like a stall at the Animal Charities Fair in London, which they offered to help run for us to help raise some funds. It all seemed a long way to go to have a tombola stall, but the suggestion sparked off the idea that it would be an ideal venue at which to launch our much discussed book, so we said we would do that. This was in the spring, and the Fair was to be in November, so plenty of time to put the book together we naively thought!

As the year went on, and draft after draft of different sections of the book were put together, we began to wonder if we would ever be able to complete the task.

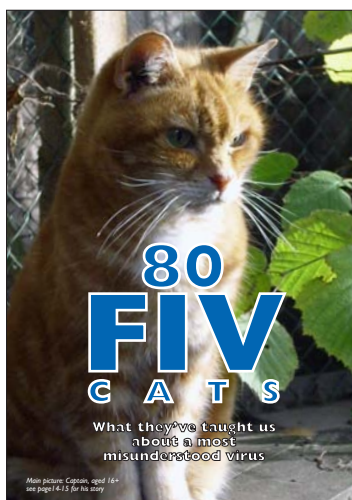
Our vets thought we were mad when we asked for all the vet notes from all the cats over the past fifteen years! It took poor Lyn at the vets ages to print out all those notes, but it was well worth her effort, as it provided the evidence we needed to put weight behind what we were claiming about the overall health of the FIV cats.

When the book was nearing completion, we asked a few people to read the draft and give us truly critical feedback - we asked a selection, one who knew a lot about FIV, another who knew almost nothing about the virus, and the others with varying degrees of knowledge about it. Their feedback was invaluable, and it enabled us to make important changes to some aspects: we are so grateful for their help.

We were up against the deadline but the book was finally printed just in time for Barbara to go to Sussex, where Maureen and Ray did so much to enable the launch at the Fair on 6 November in London.

There was much interest at the event itself, and subsequently the CatChat website and forum have helped publicise the book's availability. Our first print run all went and we have had more printed.

Until now, the majority of people who have requested a copy have been those who are already 'on board' about the virus. What we now need to do is going to be much harder, in that we need to get copies to all those who have anything to do with cats who may have FIV: often those who, up until now, have had completely the wrong idea about the virus and its consequences. If we can get copies to these people, there is hope that more FIVs will be given the chance they deserve of full lives.



Front cover

Book Contents

The basic facts about FIV
 A message to owners of FIV cats
 A message to rescuers
 So what is FIV all about?
 In the beginning
 Myths or facts
 What are the symptoms of FIV?
 What are FIV-related illnesses?
 Having FIV doesn't make a cat ill
 The Fivery
 Health record of the sanctuary FIV cats
 FIV - what is it? strains and clades
 FIV testing
 What does FIV really do to the immune system?
 FIV in perspective
 How reliable is the research into FIV?
 A 10-year study
 Should FIVs be homed as indoor-only and only cats?
 Examples of mixed households
 Life and death after rescue
 The Catwork FIV cats



Our stall at the Animal Charities Fair, London 6 November 2011 - All set up and ready for the crowds!



Maureen and Ray, without whose help and encouragement the book may never have happened - thank you!

Looking backwards, looking forwards

We started the work of caring for FIVs in the days when positive cats were routinely being destroyed even though in good health. The totally inappropriate label "Cat AIDS" meant death for thousands of animals.

Things have moved on a lot since those bad old days in the nineties, when the cats who found their way here were very much in need of sanctuary, where they could live out their lives.

These days, many more positive cats are being found homes, albeit as indoor and only cats.

Owners and rescuers are more and more doing their own research and challenging ill-informed vets on the subject of FIV. We get many people visiting our Catwork website, and now, requesting our book.

The 'book'

We will hopefully carry on our work for FIV cats with our book. The task of spreading the word this way is not straightforward. We now need to concentrate on distributing it to those who "need" to know. A few glimmers of light are appearing at the end of the tunnel, as several RSPCA officers have asked for the book, wanting to change the long held view that FIV cats are bad news. Let's hope this will continue and grow.

The new 'Cat Room' extension

Knowing that FIVs can live healthily well into their teens when given the chance, we are trying not to take on any young FIVs due to our own increasing age! These days FIVs should be in homes and not need a sanctuary.

Our focus is changing to cats with special needs, who are always going to be difficult to home. They may have health issues, be extremely nervous or just be too old.

To further our future hope of helping cats in particular need, a building has arisen at the back of the cottage in a space whose size we could never have imagined while it had a derelict loo and ancient stone shed standing on it.

This new building is in the sunniest part of the garden, and a hole for a cat flap leading on to the sunny garden was built in.

The builders have left now and so it is, as usual, up to Bob to plan and finish the building - so watch this space, literally!



"Is there room for anything here? What do we need first?"



A big lorry + a hole in the wall is a start



"I think we need a bit more than that!"



"That's more like it!" - we have a floor



We need some walls...



...and more space - for phase two



...which means more walls, for phase two



"We'll go over the wall this time"



Quality control inspection by Jack and Billy



Things begin to take shape



What a result - just what we needed... and the cat's hardly moved!