



THE CATWORK YEAR
2013

PLUCKY

Our front cover cat this year

This amazing little FIV cat, called Plucky, came to us all the way from Liverpool with the most terrible neck injury.

Being psychologically scarred as well, he was, understandably, extremely nervous. He also turned out to be diabetic!

After just six months of treatment to which he responded well, he became a changed cat in every way.

Plucky went on to win "Pet of the Year 2013" competition held by our veterinary practice. He has certainly earned his place as this year's front cover cat.

See Plucky's full story on page 22 and inside back cover.



The Catwork Year 2013

2014, a New Year - and how glad we are to see the back of 2013, a year that left us emotionally drained and somewhat exhausted, the reason for which will become apparent as you read through this yearbook.

At the end of 2012 we thought we would, in the future, be concentrating more on elderly cats, because of our advancing years and the longevity of some FIV cats; besides which, FIVs do not any longer need to be in a sanctuary situation.

However, fate took a different turn, and we became involved with more leukaemia positive cats than we have ever had at any one time.

Knowing that leukaemia virus cats (FeLVs) do not have a long life expectancy, we felt we could offer those who found their way to us a happy, albeit short, life (so many FeLVs are put to sleep because of the near impossibility of homing them, and the danger to other cats contracting this nasty virus).

Having always had a handful of FeLV cats at Catwork who, on the whole, did well for some years, we had never had really young cats who in all probability had been born with the virus. What we were not prepared for was the extreme brevity of life of those unfortunate youngsters. This yearbook, therefore, is going to be extremely painful to write and will probably sound like an obituary for the dear souls who came and went within the year.

Inevitably, we lost some FIVs, as we are always bound to do considering the numbers, and we also said goodbye to our darling housecat Billy. So, all in all, 2013 was one of the saddest and most difficult years we have experienced at Catwork.

The winter of 2013 was long and, at one point in January, our village was cut off due to heavy snow, which even made the national news! When the poet Coleridge resided in the village for three years and wrote, amongst other things, "Frost at Midnight", he could hardly have imagined, a few hundred years later, stranded travellers having to spend the night at the "Ancient Mariner" pub, opposite his cottage!

Our cats went into hibernation till the end of March, and we looked forward to welcoming the first new FeLVs to the sanctuary - three kittens from a rescue in Stroud who, having been unable to find indoor homes for them, were desperate for a solution that did not involve putting them to sleep. A mutual friend pointed them in our direction and we worked out a way to accommodate them.

Bob set about creating a new enclosed garden leading off from the chalets, known as the Felvery garden, so they could all have more room to run about - and run about they did!

The kittens, Oatsie, Tiny and Puss in Boots, were joined by Buddy, a youngster from Oxford, and, a bit later, by Willow and Bluey from Essex.

Having four FeLVs already, this brought the number of FeLVs up to ten



Steve and Dorinda enjoy the sun with Jasper and Thomas Worcester



Stella relaxes with Thomas Cornwall



Judith and Eric meet the gang



Jayne with Little Man...



...and Thomas Worcester



Nick and his nan meet the gang when delivering Willow and Bluey

by the end of May. Eight of these would be gone before the end of 2013! Babies were in fashion in the spring, as April saw the birth of Barbara's first granddaughter, Romilly.

We were unable to enjoy the long hot summer of 2013 as it was relentlessly punctuated by the sudden and early deaths of our FeLV youngsters, as well as some FIVs.

Barbara became very depressed; our close friends and the vets were very much "there" for us and gave us much moral support, telling us that the kittens' short happy lives were a bonus when they might all have been put to sleep when leukaemia was first diagnosed. In our heads we knew it to be true, but seeing such young lives come to a swift end, left us quite devastated. Suddenly the new Felvery garden was empty!

We learned a very hard lesson about the insidious nature of the FeLV virus which resides in the cat's body like a time bomb and, when triggered, leads to a, usually, very swift end. This we already knew but had not realised just how soon the virus would be triggered in those cats born with the virus. Unlike older cats with FeLV, those born with the virus have no immunity to fight against it.



Stan and Dot, loyal supporters, just can't keep away, luckily!



Sara with Cecil



Liz and Doug with a couple of lapfuls



Paul meets the gang when delivering Plucky all the way from Liverpool



Carol knows how to 'treat' the cats with chicken



Jackie cuddles them while Pete 'shoots' them (with a camera)

Autumn saw us rescuing a tabby youngster from the street outside our house - about six months old, too young to be out "playing" with the cars. Amazingly, nobody claimed him and after some weeks here, and after a complicated neutering operation and subsequent abdominal infection, we were lucky enough to get him a great home with one of our sponsors, in Gloucester.

December saw us taking back an elderly cat from our brief homing days in the mid-nineties before our work with FIVs began. He had been in foster care in Minehead for quite some time, but latterly, his fosterer had found it difficult to cope.

Christmas, as ever, brought an avalanche of cards and donations from friends old and new - another huge boost to cheer up our spirits at the end of a difficult year.

All through the year we continued to send out copies of our FIV book on a regular basis and received much positive feedback. People in many countries abroad, including Russia, Japan and the States, received the digital version of the book and, it seems, found it helpful.

As ever, our loyal friends paid us regular visits and tried to keep up our morale, bless them. The visits helped us through a very sad year.



Lorna, Lyn, Annie and Sara - 'shading' from the sun



Judy meets Trevor and Thomas Cornwall



Glynis and Derek meet the FIVs having brought FIV/FeLV Jack to Catwork



Annie with her favourite and sponsored cat, Cecil



Liz gives Baggy a cuddle



Zoe manages to stroke Barley

Our thanks, as ever, extend to the many people who sponsored us throughout 2013. Hard economic times meant we inevitably lost a few sponsors, so a big thank you to everyone who has managed to stick with us - the cats are dependent on your generosity and belief in what we do.

Thanks again to Barry and Angela who run Animal Affairs charity shop in Bristol and continue to support us.

Thanks also to Portishead Spiritualist Church for their donation - we became known to them when the treasurer's mother's cat came to spend her last years at Catwork.

Grateful thanks to Somerset and West Country Cat Clubs for their donation to Catwork.

Vet Rob down in Saltash where Thomas Cornwall was taken as a stray, sent, again, the proceeds of the collection box for "Thomas and Friends"; and Lucinda, Thomas's rescuer, sent him his annual Christmas cheque.

Thank you to Alison Gwilliam who now supplies us with free woodchip for the cat trays, our old supply having dried up when the factory closed.

The Dennis sisters in Berkshire once again sent donations and blankets, so thank you to them.



Dorinda and Jayne in 'serious mode' without cats!



Dora and Ted (Barbara's 'children') visit with Romilly (baby) and Anna



Mary and Kirsty with Jasper and Thomas Cornwall



Lesley visits Bear one last time and gets to cuddle him!



Jane meets the FIV gang



Megan, Rebecca and Dawn (Bob's grandchildren and daughter) meet the usual

Friends Dorinda and Steve in Worcester bought a seat for our new Felvery garden with which we are thrilled - thank you so much.

A new friend, Jane, surprised us with a huge pile of beautifully hand knitted blankets she had made when unwell. We spent a lovely day when she brought them, along with cat medicines she no longer needed, having lots of "cat chat".

Ongoing thanks to Moira in Leicester who fosters Oscar for Catwork, and Sue in Minehead for looking after Brandy for many years until he came back to us in December.

Our Gloucester friends have been incredibly generous, buying and delivering, personally, a car load of cat food at Christmas when Tesco, at short notice, said they were unable to deliver it to Somerset. They all work for Royal Mail but usually in the sorting office, not personal deliveries!

Jean, one of the "Gloucester gang" also helped pay for the stray kitten's neutering operation and subsequently gave him a home - thanks so much. He's now called Georgie and is doing well.

Our lovely Jayne in Worcester also paid a Christmas visit with friend Liz, playing Santa with a huge bag of goodies for all the cats, inside and out, not forgetting the rabbit.



Liz and Jayne...



Dorinda with Tommy in the Felvery, on the seat she donated



Lisa with treats for the FIV gang



Debbie and Adele attract a crowd of FIVs



Laura, Jean and Kath enjoy the sun and cats

And, lastly, our vets and all the staff at Quantock Veterinary Hospital - we are grateful to them for all the brilliant work they do but, last year more than ever, the moral support they gave us. The nurses and support staff have been great, giving tissues and cuddles to Barbara on the many occasions we have had to have cats put to sleep. The staff even donated the proceeds of a quiz night to help with expenses. We consider ourselves extremely lucky to have such a great team caring for our cats and supporting us.

Our thank you list would not be complete without reference to two of our longstanding supporters, John Cowen and Bob Villar, who sadly both passed away during 2013.

John Cowen

John's great love of animals was the driving force of his life. He used to campaign tirelessly on their behalf, writing to organisations and individuals wherever he found abuse and injustice towards animals.

He also supported, out of a meagre income, many animal rescues, Catwork included.

John came to visit us, all the way from Edinburgh, on a couple of occasions, and wrote regularly with news of his latest campaign, always enclosing a ten pound note, which we're sure he could ill afford.

When John became ill and had to go into a home, two of his friends, Bridget and Hazel, kept us updated on his progress and, after his sudden passing at Easter, Hazel gave a permanent home to his cat, Lucky, who had been staying with her. Things turned out well for Lucky; he has settled well.

So, thank you John for all you did for Catwork and all the many needy animals whose advocate you were.



Bob Villar

Bob, also, was a great animal lover and, in his time, rescued all sorts of animals in need of a home, including, one Christmas, a puppy he found abandoned in a 'phone box!

Bob lived on the no longer functioning family smallholding, so there was plenty of room for his rescues - horses, goats, rabbits, dogs, cats and even a parrot!



Bob used to be a bus driver, and he got to know about our work with the cats through chatting to Barbara's daughter, Dora, on the college bus run.

Living near a sawmill, Bob saw a way of helping us by asking the bosses if he could bag up and take away some of the sawdust produced, so we could use it in the litter trays in the garden. Bob, over many years, would make the trip over the hill from Taunton with the bags of sawdust, regularly, every quarter day, no matter what the weather. He must have saved us a small fortune in cat litter. Bob would stop for an hour or so when he brought the sawdust and retell, over coffee and biscuits, all the stories of his animal rescues and life on the buses.

The sawmill closed, so Bob was unable to provide the sawdust, added to which, he was becoming quite poorly, which was a shame as he had only just retired.

We kept in touch, but it was with some shock that we heard from his brother that Bob had died suddenly last summer on the smallholding where he'd always lived.

So, thank you Bob for supporting us, in a very practical way, all those many years and being such a loyal friend to the animals.

At the end of 2013 Catwork was home to 17 FIV cats, 3 FeLVs and 3 special needs. Our house cats numbered 8, plus 1 rabbit.

NEW ARRIVALS WHO ALSO LEFT US IN 2013

At this point we suggest, dear reader, that you get equipped with a packet of tissues!

Out of all the new arrivals who found their way to Catwork in 2013, only two are with us at the beginning of 2014.

As explained in the introduction, our new intakes consisted mainly of very young leukaemia virus positive cats, most of whom were almost certainly born with the terrible virus which meant, although we had not realised this, that they would not make it much beyond their first birthday!

Our arrivals were so very beautiful and such a joy to watch, enjoying what seemed to us to be a normal kittenhood.

THE FeLVs

BUDDY

Buddy had adopted a vet nurse in Oxford who had hoped to keep him, but when he tested positive for leukaemia, she was not able to, having a young cat already.

Claire found our website and brought him down to Somerset in March as we had agreed to take him.

Buddy was a dear little cat, very friendly, lively and eager for his food. He was able to enjoy the new Felvery garden briefly before he suddenly became lethargic and stopped eating.

In June, blood tests revealed that he had severe anaemia, caused by



the virus, which takes over the body until it cannot function.

Up until the "tipping point" is reached, the cat will seem and act normal, so it is always a shock to discover that what has been going on inside the cat's body has been far from normal.

Poor little Buddy was put to sleep at the hospital, there being nothing anyone could do for him.

OATSIE, TINY and PUSS IN BOOTS

A few days after Buddy arrived, we took in our expected trio of kittens from a rescue in Stroud, already named Oatsie, Tiny and Puss in Boots.

They were absolutely delightful, rushing about and into everything just like kittens do. Who would have known that this "time bomb" (the FeLV virus) in their tiny bodies would "explode" just a few weeks later?

As the kittens had had all the tests proving they really were FeLV positive, they were able to mix fairly quickly with the three older FeLVs - Charlie, Tommy and Davey.

What a joyful few weeks they had - so did we watching all their antics.



OATSIE

In early June, Oatsie seemed off-colour, not wanting to eat, and lethargic. Our vet said she could feel a lump so took him back to the hospital where investigations revealed abdominal



tumours. The only thing to be done to prevent suffering was to have him put to sleep with us holding him.

Worse was to follow just two days later when the other two kittens fell victim to the dreadful virus they all carried.

PUSS IN BOOTS

This little chap, usually the liveliest of the bunch, also stopped eating and was quiet and lethargic. No lumps could be found when he was examined along with Oatsie on the Monday, but by Wednesday the kidney tumours had increased



to such a degree that he too had to be put to sleep.

We had driven into the hospital for an emergency appointment for Tiny as he seemed to be having difficulty breathing, and we took Puss in Boots as well, only to see on x-ray just how much things had changed from two days earlier.



TINY

What a cutie! he was a real darling, so small and, to all outward appearances, quite perfect.

Like the others, Tiny stopped eating and rapidly became lethargic. In his case, however, his breathing became extremely rapid and we hastily got him to the hospital, fearing that he was going to die on the way. Upon arrival Tiny was immediately sedated and x-rayed. We could see from the results that the tiny cat's thymus had become so enlarged that there

was barely any room in his little chest for the lungs to breathe!

He too was not brought round as nothing could be done. We stared in shock and disbelief as our vet explained that in the young kittens the FeLV virus causes the tumours to replicate themselves at the rate of knots; two cells become four, four become eight, and so on it goes until the body is completely overwhelmed.

We returned home with the, now, dead kittens, hardly able to believe what had happened - all three gone in the space of two days!

How quiet the Felvery had suddenly become! Barbara fell into deep depression, but there were still six FeLVs to care for (and worry about) not to mention all the FIVs and housecats.

We kidded ourselves that the remaining FeLVs were older and more likely to have a longer life, but we were to lose several more yet before summer was over.

WILLOW and BLUEY

Willow and Bluey were sister and brother and had in fact been somebody's pets over in Essex.

When their mother fell poorly and it was discovered she had the leukaemia virus and had to be put to sleep, the kittens were tested and found to be positive also. The family they belonged to were not willing to keep them as indoor-only cats and Willow and Bluey were taken to be put down at a vet in Essex, where one of the nurses, being very reluctant to do this, got them signed over and he personally undertook to find them an indoor home or a sanctuary.

Yes, you've guessed, they came to Catwork last May after many, many phone calls to people and rescues had all come to nothing. The vet nurse happened to know the vet in Worcester through whom we got Charlie and Tommy, who told him about Catwork. We agreed to let them come and join the ever expanding gang of young FeLVs - their arrival brought the total number of FeLVs here to ten.

Willow and Bluey were so affectionate and soon slotted in. Willow, the female, was a bit snuffly from the outset, but Bluey, with eyes like sapphires and reminiscent of a baby polar bear, looked the picture of health. How looks can deceive, when it comes to the leukaemia virus!



WILLOW

They both enjoyed their food, fusses and playtime in the garden, but before too long it became obvious that Willow was having problems eating. Investigations revealed that she had cancer around the throat. We were told that this particular cancer can respond well to chemotherapy, so Willow had several sessions. She did improve for a bit but, being



FeLV compromised, the cards were stacked against her. She went downhill, didn't want to eat, and by July she was dead. When she declined, we put her in a pen in the hallway with a fan to keep her cool as the weather was becoming unbearably hot. She was to be seen by the vet the next day, but she died in the night. Another shock! Such a sweet-natured cat.



BLUEY

Bluey was to go on quite some months longer; we even wondered if he had escaped the virus he looked so healthy, but a blood test revealed he hadn't.

It was November when we realised that Bluey's gums were extremely pale, even his startling

blue eyes didn't look as blue, and he was no longer very active. Blood tests at the hospital revealed that he was so anaemic that he would in the next few days get weaker and weaker and die - his condition, caused by the virus, had reached a "tipping point", but had probably been going on for some weeks before it became obvious.

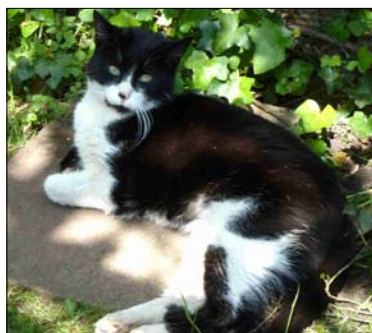
This, oh so handsome, pure white cat had to be put to sleep too - we began to think that Bob had changed careers and taken up as a gravedigger! It was a truly awful time.

OTHER FeLVs WHO LEFT US IN 2013

DAVEY

This handsome cat we collected from a vets in Wiltshire where he was taken as a stray in 2012. A locum vet nurse had asked if we could take him.

We were able to give Davey 18 months more than he might have had, which he seemed to enjoy, sharing with Charlie and Tommy once he got to know them.



In May, poor Davey was diagnosed with stomach lymphomas. We were able to give him palliative treatment for a few weeks and he was able to be out in the new Felvery garden and lap up the sunshine.

By early June, Davey was not interested in food and was very lethargic; we knew, yet again, the time had come when we could do no more for him. He too had to be put to sleep.



TOMMY

Little Tommy was a joy - bright and full of "chat", and a huge friend of Charlie. Both cats came from Worcester where their lives had been saved by a vet who knew of us. Tommy was little more than a kitten when he arrived, and it was love at first sight for Barbara.

Once his FeLV status was confirmed, Tommy was able to mix with Charlie and they became best mates, cuddling up in the same bed and having "play fights" which were a delight to watch.

The familiar FeLV pattern began to show itself in late August - lethargy and not eating. Tommy was checked at the hospital and chest lymphomas were found. All the treatment we tried was in vain, and by the middle of September, Tommy developed breathing difficulties and with very great sadness he had to be put to sleep.

We were beginning to wonder if we would have any FeLVs left by the end of the year!

THE FIVs WHO LEFT US IN 2013



FUDGE

Fudge - a new arrival who also left us.

This unusual little cat came to us from a local wildlife centre where he had been found, poorly, in one of the hedgehog pens. We agreed to take him in at Catwork and see what we could do for him. He was better than when first found, so we wanted to give him a chance.

We called him Fudge as there was a bit of a mixup as to whether or not he should be put to sleep - in other words,

a "fudge". Also, the colour of his fur was like creamy fudge.

Fudge spent the summer months here and managed to fit in, but there was always something strange about his behaviour. He was often a bit wobbly and, upon having him checked out, it was discovered he had a spinal problem.

Fudge was put on medication and had regular checkups. He was a funny little chap - in Barbara's words: "two sandwiches short of a picnic".

It came as no real surprise when, towards the end of September, Bob found him fitting in the garden. He was taken straight into hospital but the fitting could not be controlled - his spinal problems must have been contributing to the fits.

Seeing no future quality of life for Fudge, we knew that the kindest thing for him was to have him put to sleep.



BIG BOY

We had this handsome, friendly chap for a few years, and he was a great favourite with the visitors. We had taken him from CLAWS, a rescue doing great work in Berkshire. They hadn't been able to find anyone to take Big Boy on. He spent a long time in their rescue cattery after being found as a stray in somebody's garden. Poor Big Boy

was becoming very neurotic and unhappy, so we said he could come to Catwork.

Big Boy was our front cover cat of 2011 when he was at the receiving end of much dental work and almost lost an eye. Throughout it all, Big Boy remained the model patient.

Sad then that, just over a year later, what seemed at first like another dental problem, turned out to be something much more - a neurological problem which eventually affected his eyes and then his legs.

Our lovely Big Boy was put to sleep on Easter Saturday, leaving a big gap in the Fivory.

BARLEY

This nervous, handsome cat was brother to Harry. The two brothers came from Bath Cats and Dogs Home where they hadn't found a home, being exceedingly nervous as well as FIV.

In April Barley was diagnosed with kidney cancer; our vet suggested trying some chemotherapy which she knew was having good results. This consisted of putting, every fortnight, doses of a drug called Cybaratin into the system over two days at the hospital. After the first treatment our vet could hardly believe her findings, as Barley's kidney size had shrunk back to normal.

We carried on with his fortnightly chemo for some weeks, so he could spend as much time as



possible with his beloved brother. Every other Wednesday, throughout the spring and summer of 2013, Barley would go off to the hospital with his food rations and favourite biscuits, and come back here the following evening.

For a rather nervous cat, Barley coped incredibly well and became quite a celebrity at the hospital.

Before each chemo session, Barley would be blood tested to see if his body could cope with the treatment.

Sadly, in August, the pre-chemo tests revealed that Barley was no longer in remission and the cancer was back: he had to be put to sleep. We had been able to extend his time and allow him to enjoy many weeks of summer sunshine in the company of his dear brother.



BEAR

Bear had come to us via one of the receptionists at a Bristol vet. He had wandered into her house one day and taken up residence on the bed!

After being blood tested at the vets and found to be FIV positive, Lesley, his rescuer, was dismayed to find that, if unclaimed after seven days, Bear would be put to sleep.

She was determined this was not going to happen and set about finding somewhere for him to go, which was Catwork.

Bear was always a grumpy soul who didn't like being cuddled, but he coped with the other cats and enjoyed very good health until the summer of 2013 when he began losing weight and had bouts of diarrhoea. Tests and ultrasound at the hospital did not yield any clues as to what was going on - we suspect cancer, as poor Bear became anaemic and continued to lose weight and not want to eat.

He received treatment for the diarrhoea and anaemia but in the end it was obvious that Bear was losing the battle. Lesley came down from Bristol to see him for the last time and shortly after that visit, Bear was put to sleep.



BRUCE

Bruce was one of our oldies, so it was no real surprise that he came to the end of his life. He was one of our early FIVs who escaped being put to sleep by another vet in the town when taken there as a stray.

Bruce was an amiable guy who fitted in well with the gang, liked visitors and had a healthy life. As so often happens at the end, he suffered rapid weight loss. He was at the hospital having tests when he went into cardiac arrest and could not be revived. All this happened on the same day as we lost Fudge to fitting, making it a memorable Sunday - two losses in one day - a bit much!

JEMIMA

This elderly, affectionate, sweet cat was to have only one year with us, which, hopefully, was better than being put to sleep when she was taken to the vet the previous summer as a ravenous and skinny stray who was never claimed.

Many rescues do not want to bother with the oldies as they can be difficult to rehome - these are just the sort of cats Barbara loves. We were able to give her shelter, food, excellent veterinary care and a companion cat - blind Baggy - whom she used to boss around!

During that year, Jemima had a dental and was found to be hyperthyroid and was doing really well until she contracted a virus that she just couldn't shake off; the poor old lady didn't want to eat, which was really sad as she had always loved her food.

Jemima spent a week in the hospital where everything was done to try and get her eating, but all to no avail. We had to call it a day and a very sad euthanasia ensued with all of us at the hospital getting upset, as she had been a real favourite with all the staff.



BILLY - (housecat, not FIV)

The unexpected loss of our beloved housecat, Billy, was difficult to bear.

Billy, always a nervous cat from the time we rescued him in 2000 as a youngster who had been living under a shed, did so well here. He moved himself, eventually, into the house where he got on so well with all the other cats and ended up trusting us as well.



Billy had become a celebrity at the hospital back in 2011 when, very snuffly and unable to eat, a tricky operation revealed a truly enormous polyp - the biggest the vet had ever seen! He became a Pet of the Month on the strength of that.

Billy, for the next two years, went from strength to strength enjoying his food and becoming sleek and plump.

In August, we noticed Billy's tongue was hanging out the side of his mouth and an examination revealed he had lost sensation in it. At the hospital no obstruction could be seen, but this proved to be the beginning of a paralysis which took over the larynx, preventing him from swallowing or eating properly. This seemed a very cruel end for a cat who was so enjoying being able to eat after the removal of the polyp.

Poor Billy simply could not eat without choking. As a last resort, the vet had a good look down his throat under anaesthetic in the hope of finding some obstruction that might be the cause and might be removed, but, very sadly, it was a case of paralysis affecting the larynx and tongue, and so he was not brought round from the anaesthetic.

We miss him so much - that scared, scruffy old cat who, once he felt able to trust, had so much to give.

NEW ARRIVALS IN 2013 - STILL HERE

JACK

Jack is from Wolverhampton, arriving in the summer of 2013. His future looked bleak when, as a stray, he was diagnosed with both the FIV and FeLV viruses. Fortunately, however, he had chosen to home in on a "cat lady" who, although not able to keep him herself, worked with a friend who knew somebody who knew us - if you can follow that! This is how the grapevine so often works.



Anyway, approaches were made, quite desperately as it happens, as Jack had already been booked in to be put to sleep, there being nowhere for him to go. Having lost so many of our little FeLVs, we had a space for him and had to help.

Jack, as his rescuers decided to call him, was duly brought to Somerset. Much of his coat had had to be shaved and he was quite skinny.

We're glad to say that, after some initial wariness, he soon settled in at Catwork and is now looking fat and hairy.

BRANDY

This lovely old grey gentleman never actually lived at Catwork until now. He was one of the cats from the far off days in the mid-nineties when we did a bit of homing. Brandy was homed directly from the owner who had to part with him, to his new owner, with us acting as go-between. Brandy went to live with a cat lady in Minehead who was quite a character. Mrs Murphy could



never resist a cat in need, and she put up her hand for Brandy. One day, Brandy got stuck up a tree and Mrs Murphy called the fire brigade to get him down!

Brandy had many years in Minehead being spoilt rotten along with several other cats. Each time Mrs Murphy moved, all the cats went with her. When Mrs Murphy died, Brandy went missing and was eventually found near the original address we had homed him to, the other side of town.

Sue, the lady who found him and knew who he was thanks to his microchip, said she would like to keep him. We agreed to this and he became a Catwork foster cat - we would pay his vet bills when necessary.

Just before Christmas 2013, Sue was experiencing real problems with Brandy, so we said we would take him back and, hopefully, when introductions can be made, he and Baggy might form a friendship. We had Brandy completely MOT'd and he would seem to be in great working order, especially for a cat in his late teens.

Brandy looks great, seems very fit and has adapted extremely well. He loves to sunbathe but, arriving in the midst of this soggy winter, sunshine has been in short supply.

Anyway, it's great to see him again after his somewhat adventurous life down in Minehead.



PLUCKY

This brave little cat was brought to our sanctuary in May 2013, all the way from Liverpool, where he had been trapped as a stray, for a rescue which subsequently wasn't able to take him in.

The poor little chap had terrible injuries to his neck and back and, understandably, was absolutely terrified.

Meryl, the lady who had trapped him for the rescue, looked after him as best she could in a spare room in her home, having been told by the vet who neutered him that his injuries would never heal since he was found to be FIV positive - ie having a weakened immune system. (Quantock vets would later prove him wrong!)

Plucky stayed with Meryl for the next four years, but with no rescue or vet willing to help him, she was at a loss as to how to improve his quality of life.

When Meryl found our Catwork website explaining our work with FIV cats, she sought our help.

We felt we had to help. Plucky, so aptly named, was possibly our biggest challenge yet, with his severe psychological and physical problems.

So, Plucky came to Somerset and began his incredible journey of veterinary treatment and rehabilitation.

Poor Plucky was at first so terrified that catching him to get him to the vet was very traumatic, both for him and us. We had to weigh him inside the basket as he was too frightened to be taken out to be put on the scales.



The extent of his injury became clear

After several courses of antibiotics Plucky went to hospital for a full MOT check - some rotten teeth were removed, ears cleaned and bloods taken which revealed that, on top of everything else, the poor little cat was diabetic! How on earth would we ever be able to inject such a terrified cat we couldn't yet handle with the all important insulin? For now all we could do was get him on the tablets and a special diet to help his condition.

Plucky seemed to enjoy his new surroundings and being able to be out in the fresh air. He would go up and down the ladder propped against his chalet and watch what was going on from a high vantage point. He started to miaow when he saw us coming with food and would descend the ladder eagerly to eat it.



Plucky settled into his own area in the sanctuary with access to 'viewing platform'

Plucky's weight was being monitored to get him to a point where he could cope with surgery on his neck, which our vet was keen to do - no mean feat to draw the two ends of such a huge wound together and stitch it up.

On the big day of the operation, Plucky had 85 stitches around the neck injury. Pulling the skin up gave Plucky a 'siamese look!' The vet also found the back injury that had healed was in a straight line and looked suspiciously like a knife wound! What on earth had happened in this little cat's past?

The operation went well and Plucky was allowed home the next day. We put him in our hospital bay so we could deal with him more easily as we also had to treat his eye for an ulcer!

Plucky's recovery went well with lots of trips to the vet to have stitches removed, a few at a time, and have his eye monitored.



Plucky became quite relaxed during his regular check-ups



85 stitches held the wound together whilst it healed



We were all amazed at just how well the wound healed and the fur grew back over the whole area

Throughout all this Plucky continued to eat well and was obviously beginning to trust us. We began to feel we might, after all, be able to tackle his diabetes by giving him the all-important insulin injections.

So, back to hospital again. Plucky's weight being stable, he was assessed for the correct amount of insulin he would need each day, and we began to give him the twice daily injections.

Plucky now allows us to inject him and put drops in his eye with little protest. He has found a purr and even enjoys a cuddle!

Within six months this little cat has overcome so many hurdles, both physically and psychologically. He is a shining example of what we have shown at Catwork over the years: that an FIV cat can respond to treatment just like any other cat - not only is Plucky FIV positive but also diabetic and elderly.

He is one amazing little cat.



OTHER CATS HELPED

WILLIAM

One autumn morning, our neighbour drew our attention to a tabby youngster in the road outside our house. He was much too young to be out in the street "playing with the cars"!



William, as we called him (after the neighbour who spotted him) was not neutered or microchipped, but we fully expected, after putting up a notice, that his owner would come forward. This, however, didn't happen. We were happy to look after him here as we had a space for him, but we found it extremely difficult finding him a home.

Anyway, before we could think of homing him, we needed to get him neutered and microchipped. The neutering was much more complex than is usually the case, as one testicle had not descended, so William needed an abdominal operation. Leaving him un-neutered might have resulted in cancer later on, not to mention more kittens!

All this meant William was with us for some time. All attempts at finding him a home having failed so far, Barbara remembered that one

of our sponsors was now 'catless' and wondered if she would be in the market for this lively, affectionate youngster. Our lovely, generous Jean, who had already helped with his expensive operation, expressed an interest, but was a little worried about her two dogs.

Anyway, Jean came to see him and happened to bring a basket with her! Yes, William got himself a super home in Gloucester, soon sorted the dogs out and is keeping Jean on her toes with his huge appetite and desire to play. He has been renamed Georgie and certainly landed on his paws.

We realised through this incident just what our friends in rescue are up against, trying to find homes for far too many cats. Many kittens are growing up in rescue as there is such a shortage of homes. Animal centres are bursting at the seams. The economic situation is affecting everyone, and animals are often the first to suffer.



Jean takes him home

MAIA

Another small tabby we were able to help was Maia, Again, a neighbour brought the cat to our door, having found her in the car park, very hungry. We took her in until we could get her checked out.

This little cat had a microchip and, to everyone's amazement, had been missing from the town, eight miles away, for more than a year!



The owner never thought she would see her again. Considering how fit Maia looked, she must have been doing pretty well for herself.

Getting an animal microchipped is so important. When a stray with a chip is taken to a vet and scanned, lost pet and owner can soon be reunited, as in this case.

It makes one wonder how many animals in rescue centres belong to somebody, and who could get back to their real owners if only they had been microchipped: added to which, rescue centres might not be so full. Microchipping is so cheap, but can make such a difference if a pet goes missing.

UPDATE ON OTHER CATS - NOW IN HOMES

FLYNN - initially helped in 2012.

By a quirk of fate, which meant life, not death, for Flynn, the vet in Cheshire where he'd been taken, neutered him before blood testing him. Cats Protection had instructed things to be done the other way round and put to sleep if FIV positive or neuter for rehoming if negative. This is going



on all the time for stray cats and makes us very, very angry; we're not even talking of poorly cats!

Anyway, it was Flynn's lucky day as, having found him to be positive after neutering, the vet was left "holding the baby", as Cats Protection wanted no more to do with him.

The practice manager was given our number at Catwork as we'd had dealings with a rescue in Cheshire in the past. Having two wonderful sponsors in Cheshire, Barbara phoned for help, which was swiftly forthcoming. Roger, known to us through his own FIV cat, went to the vets which happened to be not far from his home, and said he would take Flynn after he'd been microchipped. Viv knew nothing of this, but was also only too pleased to help; she instantly fell in love with this characterful cat and, after patiently working with him to overcome his nervousness, Flynn took his place as the third feline family member.

We have since heard that Flynn has fitted in really well with his house mates, Fred and Feebie.

What a story and what a happy ending for Flynn. Thanks so much Viv and Roger.



JOEY

Joey was a cat we collected at the request of a vet nurse in Chippenham, where he had been taken as a stray and tested positive for leukaemia virus on a first in-house test. The first FeLV test should never be taken as definite; another test should be done twelve weeks later to be sure the cat is positive.

Joey was extremely lucky as we were able to give him that time and, to our great surprise, as it is

quite unusual, Joey's result came back negative.

Joey was lucky again when he caught the eye of our friend Claire who was visiting. Suffice it to say that Joey is having the time of his life at the "Catwork Outpost" as we call it, as Claire has adopted so many cats from Catwork over the years. Joey is keeping down the rodent population in the surrounding fields and proving to be a most likeable character who made himself instantly at home. Another lucky cat!



MINSTREL

This lovely long-haired cat spent a while with us recuperating after we had taken him from a Bristol vet where he would have been put to sleep as an unclaimed FIV stray.

David and Trish, who had been feeding Minstrel and took him

to the vet when unwell, couldn't believe that he would be put to sleep. We liaised with them and they visited Minstrel at Catwork and, when recovered, came to fetch Minstrel back to Bristol where he lives with several other cats and is much loved.

UPDATE ON THE PRESENT CATWORK CATS

THE FIV_s

CECIL

This sweetest of cats is still with us despite being hyperthyroid and, now, quite elderly. We've had him since 2002, making him about 15.

He was our last year's front cover cat; we wanted to give him his 'moment of fame' not thinking he'd get through another winter. However, as I write this at the end of January, here he still is, bright as a button and enjoying a private heated chalet.

Cecil has a fortnightly vitamin boost and loves the attention he gets at the vets and from visitors.



BERTIE

Bertie had another good year in 2013. He was found just next door in 2008, and, being unclaimed and FIV positive, he simply stayed with us.

Bertie is a sweet cat who loves attention when he can get it. He's looking fit and plump.

THOMAS CORNWALL

Thomas came to us in 2007 and is still sponsored by his rescuer down in Cornwall. He has done well again in 2013. Thomas is a confident cat who loves his food and is good with visitors, usually ending up in most of the photos.





SAM

Sam was lucky to find a rescuer, back in 2011, who didn't give up on him despite him being in a really bad way when she caught him. Her vet too was on her side, thank goodness. After some immediate treatment and some weeks of TLC, Sam arrived at Catwork all the way from Stoke-on-Trent. He has done very well, growing into a plump, confident cat. Sam's one ongoing issue is a sore mouth for which he receives

daily medication to keep him eating comfortably. What a transformation!

TREVOR

Trevor, with us since 2011, achieved a vet free year and is doing well. He came from a FIV-friendly vet in Southampton. Slightly wary of some of the other cats, he can cope fine and doesn't miss out. Trevor is very fond of humans and his food!



MR MOG

Arriving, in 2011, from a rescue called the Moggerly, which does not deal in FIVs, Mr Mog seemed a good name for this cat.

It's hard to believe now how nervous Mr Mog was when he first came, hiding down behind the chalet and having to be coaxed out.

Apart from an eye infection early in the year, Mr Mog has had no health issues. He's quite a playful chap and rushes around, bounding over the rocks. He is now well settled.

THOMAS WORCESTER

We managed to get this cat away (2012) from the Cats Protection in Worcester where, being poorly, he was in a perilous position and may well not have been allowed the time needed to recuperate. He had been found weak and anaemic, but was actually owned and had a microchip. His owner did not know where he had gone and, anyway, was no longer able to look after him.



The fact of his being chipped and the owner wanting to get him away from the Cats Protection in case he was put down due to being a "pen blocker", gave Thomas a way of escape - to Catwork.

His anaemia problem solved, Thomas did well for some time but, last year, developed a sore mouth. When the usual treatment was not successful, Thomas ended up having a major dental just before Christmas. He's now doing much better.

GUY



Guy, who arrived at Catwork on Bonfire weekend in 2004, had no health problems at all until 2012, when he began to lose weight. We and the vet thought the weight loss and huge appetite would show he was hyperthyroid, but tests showed this was not the case.

The fact is that Guy's extreme thinness and manic appetite continue despite every test the vet can think of to get to the bottom of why he is this way.

Guy is weighed fortnightly and remains more or less the same weight. He has a vitamin injection to enable the food to be better utilised, but he remains a complete mystery. Despite seeming to be always ravenously hungry, he is very bright and active.

RALPH

Ralph has been with us since 2009, coming with Thomas Redruth with whom he had lived down in Cornwall. Their owner was finding them too much to cope with - they were stealing all they could find that they could eat - a really greedy pair!

The owner's sister was a vet nurse who knew a nurse at Thomas Cornwall's practice, so we were asked to help, and we agreed to take them on. Having been indoor cats, they really appreciated the chance to be in the fresh air.

Ralph is doing really well and, apart from stomatitis (sore mouth) which we are able to keep under control with a small dose of ovarid twice a week, he has no other health issues.



THOMAS REDRUTH

Still sharing with his mate Ralph, as he always has, Thomas is also doing well. He did need a major dental in 2013, which does not seem to have affected his enormous appetite.



JASPER

Jasper had a very good year in 2013, with no health problems. He still likes to be at the centre of things when visitors come, and still likes to drape himself round somebody's neck like a tabby/white scarf.

Jasper has been with us since 2006, and was one of the cats friend Mary managed to save from a multi-cat household being investigated by the RSPCA. If they had got hold of him he probably wouldn't have had the eight years he has gained so far. Jasper looks fit with no health issues.





BT

BT came from a Berkshire vet in 2007, where a phone call literally saved his life - hence his name! He was also known as Big Ted, though despite having no health issues, he seemed to lose some weight in 2013.

He remains fit and well with a healthy appetite. BT too gained 7 years he might not have had without that life-saving phone call.

It doesn't bear thinking about all those FIVs being put to sleep for no reason, other than their inconvenience, who are perfectly healthy and could go on to live good long lives.

TOBY

Toby, one of our young FIVs, was on death row at a "rescue" in Southampton. (These places do not deserve the name when cats are 'rescued' only to die.)

We took him on in 2011 and he has been a healthy cat, growing up and filling out. His one 'problem' has been his mouth from time to time. Toby needed another dental right at the end of 2013. He's now fine and eating well again.



WOODY

Woody came from a vet in Gloucester, in Wood street, where vet nurse Laura set about trying to save his life as he would, yet again, have been put down. He found his way to Catwork in 2007

and attracted as sponsors Laura's mum, Jean, and aunt and friends from the Royal Mail where Jean worked. Woody's adopted rescuer also sponsors him - all in all a popular chap.

Woody was doing well until the autumn, when we noticed he was losing weight, and tests revealed he had a thyroid problem. On the correct level of medication, he put weight back on. However, at the end of 2013, despite his thyroid medication doing its job, he was losing weight again, very rapidly.

Sadly, while this book is being put together, Woody has been our first casualty of 2014. The vets think that cancer must have been at the root of his sudden and rapid weight loss. However, until the very end of 2013 Woody had been able to enjoy several years of good health, running around and "eating for England".

HARRY

It seems strange writing about Harry without Barley; they were such a duo, always together, but we lost Barley in 2013 to kidney cancer.

The brothers had come to us in 2010 from Bath Cats and Dogs Home, where they had been for some time. Not only were they FIV positive, but both were incredibly nervous and not at all 'homing material'.

When approached by one of their carers at the time, we agreed to take them on, though they remained extremely nervous for a long time. Eventually, time and routine worked their usual magic, and they learnt to trust.



Harry had a good year health-wise (unlike his brother). He did have a minor eye infection and it was traumatic getting him to the vets, as all his old worries surfaced again. Luckily there was no ongoing treatment to be given, as putting ointment in Harry's eye would have been impossible.

As the year went on Harry seemed to become less nervous, and Barbara can now stroke him! We wondered what effect losing his brother might have on him but we think he has coped well. He has blind George for a companion and lavishes much affection on him, much to George's bemusement! Harry is one handsome looking cat, and we're so glad we were able to help.

GEORGE

George has been with us since 2011, coming from a Berkshire FIV-friendly vet used by our friends who run a rescue there. Good job the vet was FIV-friendly as poor George didn't have a lot going for him - as well as FIV positive, he's blind, black and elderly - just the sort of dear soul we love here at Catwork.



George has enjoyed two years of good health and leads a protected life in a good sized area, now with Harry. George gets almost knocked over by Harry's exuberant head-bumps, but doesn't seem to mind! The only time George gets a bit grumpy is when we have to groom him; he really doesn't like it, but he's a dear old boy.

OSCAR (fostered)

Moira, up in Leicester, took on Oscar at a time we were not able to take him ourselves.

Oscar had been found on the edge of the road but was, apparently, uninjured, just lost and dazed. He was lucky that the nurse dealing with him down in Dorset tried to get him a home or rescue, as the hospital's policy was to put down FIVs, even though young and healthy, as Oscar was.



Upon Oscar's arrival in Leicester he did a disappearing act but, knowing where he was being fed, would sneak in for food when no one was about. Moira's son set up a camera trap and caught him on video sneaking into the utility room and eating the food put out for him. He put in such a star performance that he was given the name Oscar.

Oscar has been with Moira for some years now and is no longer the frightened cat he was. He has enjoyed very good health and is well settled.

THE FeLVs



DANNY

Danny, coming from Birmingham in 2010, is now the longest surviving of the FeLVs. After our disastrous FeLV year of 2013, we only have three FeLVs, one of which is newcomer Jack (see New Arrivals). As Danny was really young when he was brought to us, he is doing extremely well for a FeLV. The FeLVs who are born with the virus do least well, so this was probably not the case with him.

Sometimes the FeLV virus 'hides away' in the bone marrow and resides there for many years - like Giles who came as a young FeLV but survived into double figures, thus breaking all the "FeLV rules".

Danny, who loves people, still doesn't get on with other cats, so has to live in an area all to himself. Healthwise he had a good year in 2013.

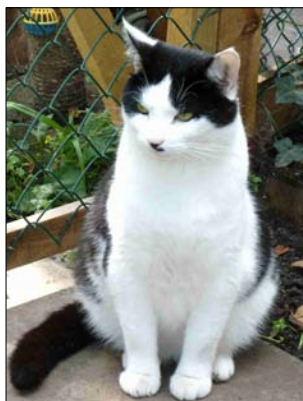
CHARLIE

When we took in Charlie nearly three years ago, he brought us several good friends - his rescuer Dorinda, Jayne who was, at the time, doing "lost and found" work, and Jayne's friends Liz and Nicky. All of them regularly visit Catwork, always laden with goodies for the cats (and us!)

Charlie was going for food to Dorinda's garden, but when it was obvious he was a stray, he was taken to a Worcester vet who never puts cats to sleep unless they are suffering.

Catwork was approached after much searching for somewhere for Charlie to go. He has done very well here with no real health issues.

We were worried about him when we lost his best mate little Tommy, in 2013, as Charlie went off his food, but nothing could be found, physically, to be amiss, so we suspect it was psychological as they were very close. Charlie is doing well again now, thank goodness.



THE SPECIAL NEEDS CATS

SANDY

Sandy was a stray who had adopted one of our sponsors. When she first came to us after her owner died, in 2005, she was very much a 'special needs' case, as she was absolutely terrified of people. It took two months to even get anywhere near her.

As time progressed she lost all her nervousness and now positively seeks people out for a fuss! Her owner's niece and husband who sponsor Sandy can hardly believe she is the same cat!



Sandy occupies a special corner of the utility area where she has a heated bed, in which she spends most of the time sleeping, as she must now be quite elderly. She has kidney problems and is on daily medication and has regular check ups as well.

It is so rewarding to have been able to find the 'real' Sandy - she's quite a character.



BAGGY

Blind Baggy has been with us nearly two years now. He was made homeless when his owner, who had inherited him with the house she bought, had to sell and move into rented accommodation here in the village, where she wasn't allowed to take the cat.

Baggy's owner heard we might possibly be able to help and, having a nice big chalet and surrounding protected area, we were pleased to be able to take him.

Baggy instantly worked out where everything was and is actually quite an adventurous old boy, despite being blind. For around a year Baggy had an elderly lady companion, Jemima, an unclaimed needy little stray

we took on from our vet. Jemima was certainly 'top cat', but Baggy didn't seem to mind being bossed around by her. Sadly, and unexpectedly, Jemima got a virus which seemed to affect her throat and nothing would persuade her to eat. Baggy caught the same virus and was also hospitalised.

Very sadly, Jemima being quite elderly and frail, never got over the virus, but well-covered, fitter Baggy did.

Now Baggy is fit and well, enjoying his food and his little forays out into the garden, weather permitting.

Baggy is a lovely old boy, very responsive and affectionate and a great hit with visitors.



*Little Jemima holds position on the chair,
as poor Baggy tries to squeeze on too!*

HOUSECATS

MILLIE

Millie, Barbara's favourite cat, gave much cause for concern at two points during 2013. Against all the odds, our little old lady (aged 17+) is still with us.

In January of 2013, Millie stopped eating and all the usual investigations gave no clue as to why. She was hospitalised and a very observant vet noted that Millie seemed worried when touched near the mouth. No obvious problem could be seen,

so it was as a last resort that she was anaesthetised to get a better look. To everyone's amazement, they found that a tooth below the gum had fractured and split her tiny jaw! It must have been extremely painful and it was now obvious why she had stopped eating.

Millie's jaw had to be wired; she came home on heavy duty medication and needed very frequent check-ups during the healing process. The little trooper came through it all and made a good recovery.

As Millie is elderly, hyperthyroid and with kidney issues, she did brilliantly to come through such a nasty problem and operation.

Millie resumed her normal routine, pottering about in the hot summer just outside the back door. In August, however, came blow number two! Millie appeared to have suffered a mini stroke - her balance was upset and she seemed "not with it". Her blood pressure results were good and gradually she seemed to right herself, though has greatly slowed down and appears not to see properly and sleeps most of the time. She still seems the happy little soul she always has been, always washing, eating well and responding to Barbara with a 'head bump' - what a little star!





MARMADUKE

Marmaduke has been with us since he was about 8 weeks old, in 2002. He was brought to the door unable to walk, having been found by the side of the busy village bypass.

With his leg fixed, Marmaduke has never looked back. He is unable to curl his leg up when sitting, but is able to dash about, climb trees and

generally be more active than the others. He remains one of the fussiest eaters, still enjoying best the things he can pinch! He also remains a firm favourite with visitors, always here to meet and greet. Marmie is a handsome, fun-loving affectionate cat.

JACK

Big beautiful Jack was brought to the door as a kitten in 2005. He was found wandering in the village and was never claimed, so ended up staying with us.

Jack was diagnosed with a serious congenital heart condition some years ago, so has done well. He is on daily medication for his heart problem, which is obviously doing the trick. Jack is quietly affectionate and loves fusses and food.



POLLY

Our little five-toed 2006 stray who stayed is doing well, despite having to cope with the 'upstairs gang', consisting of Oliver and Little Man. She gets quite grumpy with them when they get over-excited.

Polly loves nothing better than to stretch out full length on the pouffe in front of the fire on winter evenings.



OLIVER

Oliver was found as a small kitten by the postman on his Christmas rounds in 2007. Nobody ever claimed him so he stayed with us. He is a chubby little chap who loves his food and warmth. He is not a 'lap cat' and often prefers to stay upstairs. Ever since Oliver had a serious blockage of the urinary tract, he has been on capsules to help prevent any further blockages.



They seem to be very effective and he knows that a capsule popped down his throat is immediately followed by a treat!

He has Little Man to play with these days, but can often be heard giving a hiss when he's had enough (Little Man, however, never knows when enough is enough!)



LITTLE MAN

This little cat came from a farm in Worcester in 2012, where lots of inbreeding was causing various problems and deformities. Our friends noticed that the little cat's neck was so twisted that it looked as if his head was on the wrong way round! He

would never have coped with eating and, feeling very sorry for him, we took him on. The removal of a large polyp improved things no end. These days one could hardly tell he'd had such a deformity.

Little Man is, however, a really naughty and very vocal little cat, always causing trouble. He's very hyperactive and carries things off - the strangest object being a slate coaster! How he manages to pick it up we don't know.

For all his naughtiness, Little Man is very affectionate - a really strange little guy!



SOOTY

At the opposite end of the age scale from Little Man, and also from Worcester, is Sooty. She came to us from the same household as FIV Thomas Worcester when their owner was no longer able to cope.

Sooty, for all her tiny size, has a big personality; she knows exactly what she wants, is extremely vocal in her demands and very fussy. She is, as well, very affectionate and loves to be on a lap.

COCO

Barbara brought Coco back from Eastbourne when she did the book launch in 2011. His terminally ill owner was desperately worried about this young stray she had taken on and now needed to rehome. Coco being black and extremely nervous, her fears were well founded. Black cats are so often overlooked in rescues and Coco, being nervous, would have had even more difficulty getting a home.



Anyway, he came home with us to Somerset where he has done really well, preferring to stay indoors most of the time, having the odd 'rough and tumble' with Marmaduke and eating as much as he possibly can.

Coco is still unsure of himself and runs and hides under the bed when visitors come. He is big and handsome with an oriental look and is quietly affectionate.



MR DARCY

Darcy rabbit had a good year enjoying his run, his food and visitors, who often bring him treats as well as the cats.

Darcy is a lovely character who loves to be fussed.

I - FIV

Things seem to be much the same as reported in last year's rant about FIV - too many prejudiced and misinformed vets giving out the wrong message about the virus, and too many 'rescue' organisations still killing these cats. We had hoped our book on FIV, based on what we learnt about the virus over many years, would have had more effect on those who have influence on policy making, but we feel that it is only individuals we have helped. This is, of course, worthwhile, and from the feedback we get from people who have requested the book, we know that many FIV lives have been saved. Those who took the trouble to do some research instead of believing everything they were told about FIV, are people who were already half converted: the big problem is how to convince those with the power to change things that FIV is not the terrible virus it's made out to be.

It is so hard to convince people with entrenched views on the subject, and yet many such people often have very little experience of FIV cats - certainly not the sort of numbers who have lived out their lives at Catwork. As long as FIV cats are thought to have a "terrible disease", which is how we heard one 'expert' describe it last year, they are never going to get the chance they so deserve.

The same old 'rescue' organisations are still destroying FIVs. RSPCA are the chief culprits, but also big names like Cats Protection (what a misnomer! See how Flynn had a lucky escape from a Cats Protection group in Cheshire, see p27) and Blue Cross.

Blue Cross are still putting down FIVs and testing kittens, which is pointless as no valid result can be obtained until a cat is at least six months old.

Head Office policy of Cats Protection and Blue Cross is not unreasonable - FIVs to be placed as only cats and be kept indoors (we have our own views on that!) However, at grass roots level, such placements are difficult to find and, consequently, FIVs are known as "pen blockers".

The large organisations have targets to meet (yes, it's getting to be big business) and FIVs, being difficult to home, will be the first to be put

down. Admitting that FIV is not really a problem would mean even more cats to find homes for in an already overcrowded market, so those involved are unlikely to be convinced of the reality when it makes life harder for them. All this means that for the FIV cats out there, it is still very much a lottery as to which rescue they end up in and the attitude of the individuals dealing with them.

RIP all those FIVs killed for no good reason, but simply because they were inconvenient.

2 - FeLV

FeLV (leukaemia virus) cats really do present genuine problems for homing organisations. Very few people are willing to take on a positive cat, keep it indoors and be aware that it will probably have a short life.

The rescue in Stroud could not have tried harder to home the three FeLV kittens who, in the end, came to us. They ran newspaper articles and were very honest about the virus and its implications.

If 'rescue' (as opposed to rehoming) is about saving individual animals, as it should be, then surely it would be possible for the big organisations with the money to create a few sanctuaries around the country, so cats like FeLVs, who really are difficult to home, can at least be allowed to enjoy what life they have without it being cut even shorter?

Rescue and rehoming are not always compatible, but we don't believe one should be at the expense of the other. We believe that every animal life is precious and worth saving, whatever that may mean.

And finally...

Plucky has won an award!

Each month, our vets at Quantock Veterinary Hospital, vote for a 'Pet of the Month' - Plucky was voted the winner for September.

At the end of the year, all twelve Pets of the Month stories, are presented to judges and owners; the judges select one pet as 'Pet of the Year'. - Guess what? Plucky won!

He was so thrilled that he wrote about it in a poem...

PLUCKY WINS “PET OF THE YEAR 2013”



I was a stray in Liverpool,
The vet up there - he was a fool.
He said he had no help for me
Because of this thing - 'FIV'.
My neck and back were wounded bad,
I felt so very scared and sad.
My rescuer - she called me Plucky
And felt that one day I'd get lucky.
She did all that she could for me,
But no one took her seriously.

At last she found a sanctuary
That's full of other fivs like me.
It sounded great, with nice fresh air,
I felt I could be happy there.
A comfy bed and lots of food,
This new life might be rather good.
From rooftop height I liked to gaze
And snooze away hot summer days.

A brand new vet I had to see
Who seemed to do a lot with me.
He weighed and jabbed me - talked a lot,
Something about a tricky op.
I heard him say, "Oh what the heck!
I'll get to grips with Plucky's neck.

His weight is stable, now's the time
To do the op, he'll be just fine!
I'll pull the ends up like a sweater,
He'll look and feel a whole lot better.
I'll join the ends up where they meet
With lots of stitches, oh so neat.
He might just look a bit siamesee,
But I can do it - easy peasy!"

I'm back at home and feeling furry.
There seems to be just one more worry,
It would seem I'm diabetic!
I can cope - I'm not pathetic.
Life's really good, I'm feeling great,
Is there something to celebrate?
It must be good, made Barbara smile,
Haven't seen that in quite a while!
Something's happened, I get a treat,
It seems I've pulled off quite a feat.
So what is this - a cup for me,
Awarded by the judges three?
"They" got flowers and a hamper,
Isn't it me they're meant to pamper?
"Pet of the Year!" Who me, old Plucky?
How did I get to be so lucky?
I had to come to Somerset
To get to be a winning pet!