



THE CATWORK YEAR

2008



## GILES - our front cover cat this year

Our front cover cat is chosen to illustrate something about the work we do – which is to care for, and make a study of, cats with FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and FeLV (Feline Leukaemia Virus). As Giles carries both viruses, and has done so for some years, he shows how well cats can do despite this. He has rarely needed veterinary care since he came here in 2002! He did, however, have a dental last year.

What many people do not realise is that adult cats with leukaemia can do very well if given the chance, like Giles; but very young cats who contract the virus will almost certainly die – such a shame that older cats are invariably given a death sentence through lack of knowledge of this simple fact. FIV, as we have been saying for years, is “nothing to write home about”, but the fact that Giles is both FIV and FeLV makes him especially interesting.



## The Ups and Downs of 2008

2008 turned out to be a very difficult and sad year, during which we lost several dear cat-loving friends. Especially upsetting were the untimely deaths, first of Beryl, then of Pat, both of whom we had known for many years and from whom we always received so much support and encouragement. Both ladies brought sunshine into the lives of all they met, and are much missed.

Barbara's interest in homoeopathic remedies began when she met Pat, who used them herself, and you will find throughout the yearbook references to various complementary treatments we use on the cats as well as conventional ones.

Barbara owes so much to Beryl for encouraging her, not only with Catwork, but also her writing. Beryl was a member of the lively poetry group called Catharsis, which met for some years, often in Barbara's house, to study poets and attempt to write. A couple of poems, where they have a relevance, have been included at the end of this yearbook.

2008 also saw the death of three owners to whom we had homed cats in our early rehoming days – always sad when owners die before their pets. Weekly, a sweet little tortie, was taken on by another family member; Spider came back to us, but Brandy, a lovely grey, went missing after his owner suddenly died. We spent many hours last spring in Minehead where Brandy lived, putting up posters and spreading leaflets around in an attempt to find him. Many months passed and we thought we'd never hear of Brandy again, but towards the end of the year Barbara had a call saying that he'd been found as a stray, through his microchip number! The lady who took him in expressed a wish to keep him, and we agreed, but are still ultimately responsible for him. Brandy is now well into his teens.

No matter what, life at Catwork has to go on, but was made especially difficult through much of 2008 due to Barbara's ill health. It has made us realise that we are not going to be able to continue taking in more and more FIV cats (who are often young) while we are getting older and less fit. We have finally had to face up to our limitations and must begin to "wind down". This in itself will take several years as we still have over 40 cats in our care, some of which are still quite young. We would therefore value your ongoing support which, as ever, has been amazing.

While many small rescues in the current climate are struggling to survive, Catwork is blessed with the support it needs to look after the cats in our care.

Thanks must go to everyone who helps the cats – our regular sponsors, those who give food and items for the cats, and those who have given extra donations and fund raised.

We have, as ever, received regular cheques from Animal Affairs Charity Shop in Bristol, several cat clubs, Cat Protection Forest of Dean's fund for "Tutts and friends"; Albert Street Vet Clinic, Saltash, for "Thomas' fund", Deane vets in Taunton and Silva House, Midsomer Norton, for



Annie, Sara and Lyn, with Ben



Peter and Jackie with Joseph, Woody, Thomas, and Bruce trying to get in on the act



Amelia and Lisa, with Jasper



Zara and Mary with Thomas, Bruce and Jasper



Jean, Adele and Debbie (lady of the pouches) with Joseph and Jasper

helping fund Teddy, a deaf/blind cat we took from them. Grateful thanks as ever to Bob, who, although now retired, still brings us bags of wood chippings for the litter trays in the garden.

As always, we are much indebted to our vets and staff at the Quantock Veterinary Hospital, who not only do a great job, but are also very supportive. We feel very lucky to have such a good working relationship with the people we rely on to look after the health of our cats.

Thank you so much for what, in various ways, you enable us to do at Catwork.

Throughout 2008 we got involved, as ever, with people in our village who lost cats, and our trap was put to good use once the escapees had been located. We also tried to help Mikey, a super cat who had almost certainly been dumped in the Quantocks. One of our sponsors agreed to take him on.

We collected and boarded little Judy for a while for a rescue centre. She was found in Burnham, very thin, and given shelter by a couple.

We have continued to help people, Bob through the website and Barbara over the phone, with various FIV-related issues, and even



Sarah with Blackie, Thomas and Jasper



Sara surrounded! Bootsy, Joseph, Thomas, Batty and Bruce, with Woody approaching



Tea time in the fivory, Lyn, Annie and Sara get the tea, and Joseph and Blackie get the cuddle



Madge, Ron and Ann, with Joseph, Bruce and Thomas Cornwall - funny how it's the same few cats each time in the photos!

persuaded a few people to keep their strays who turned out to be FIV, which is great news. We feel that finally the word is getting through that FIV is not what it's been made out to be, though sadly there's still a long way to go with some vets and rescue organisations.

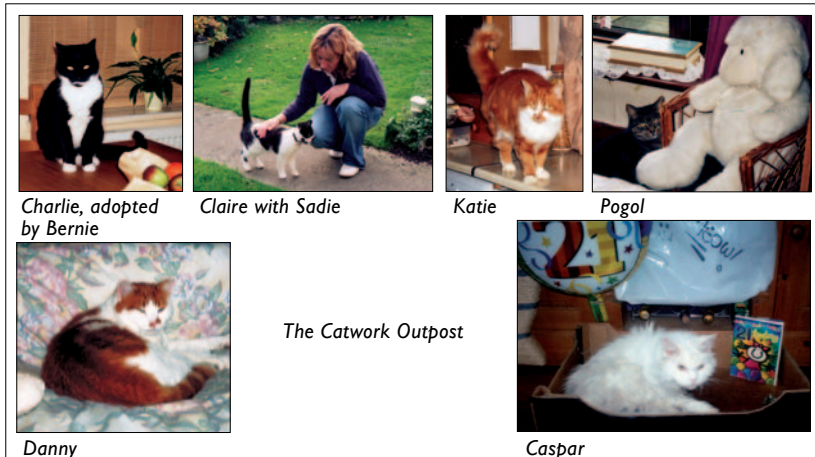
Despite the bad summer weather, we had quite a few visitors, which the cats always love, as they invariably get extra treats and fuss.



Carol and Dave make a winter visit...and again in the summer with their grand daughter Chloe

Lisa, Heather and Sean bring their annual treats for the cats

Highlights of a difficult year was a study course on Thomas Hardy for Barbara – did you know he was a great animal lover and champion of their rights? – a visit to friends in Gloucester who rescue pedigree cats, and who kindly fostered Badger for us till we could take him in, and a trip to old friends Bernie and Claire of the “Catwork outpost” frequently mentioned in yearbooks. It was lovely to see again cats they adopted who were not special needs.



Charlie, adopted by Bernie

Claire with Sadie

Katie

Pogol

The Catwork Outpost

Danny

Caspar

On the cat front, also, 2008 was difficult. We lost three cats in dramatic and unexpected fashion – Mr Chips to an aggressive tumour at the start of the year, and Conner and Dylan both to a thrombosis (quite rare) at the very end of the year. The hospital sees few cases of blood clots, so we have been very unlucky to lose two cats within a fortnight to this condition. The festive season was overshadowed by shock and sadness.

We did have a lucky homing of an FIV cat, Roger, now called Timmy, to friend Marilyn (see New Arrivals section). We rarely home an FIV having rescued it, as we don't want its life to be endangered again by some ignorant vet blaming all its future health problems on its FIVness (as some do!)



Frances and Marilyn with Joseph and Bruce

At the time of writing, in freezing January, (don't worry about the cats, they can stay in their heated chalets and pile in on top of each other), Catwork is home to 32 cats funded by our sponsors and supporters, and 9 house cats, making a total of 41 cats, not forgetting Barnaby our rescue rabbit. Of these, 24 are FIV, 3 FeLV, 5 special needs and 9 house cats, all but one being rescues we took on ourselves.



A cathuddle - Captain, Percy, Tutts and Cecil find a warm patch (just over one of the tube heaters)

## NEW ARRIVALS IN 2008

### BARNEY (FIV)

A semi-feral town cat we tried to help. We were told of him by a friend and supporter who was putting food out for him. She noticed he had a terrible neck wound that needed treatment, and was worried about him. The local CP group offered to “help” by lending a trap and, once caught, taking him to the vet to be put down! Our friend, quite rightly, seeing this as a terrible betrayal, didn’t want to do this.



We offered to help and took our own trap in an attempt to catch and treat him, which we did in fact do. We took the cat to our vet, where he was treated and, next day, he was neutered and microchipped – he was in fact not FIV, so we put him on his own near the house in a chalet no one had got out of before. Barney, big, strong and very determined to have nothing to do with humans, managed to break out and, sadly, despite all the usual posters, leaflets etc, we did not get him back.

One of our failures? Not sure. He was skilled at fending for himself over many years; his wound was treated, he is now neutered and was given a chance of the life he’d known for a long time. There have been reports of a stranger in the camp round the back of us, but no one would be able to pick him up. We called him Barney because we fell out with the local group as we did not agree with their plan for him.

### SAM (FIV)

Sam was a sad, quiet little cat, with very unusual markings, who had been turned out in Minehead when his breeder / owner did a runner and left!



Sam found his way to a cat lover’s shed where he was fed and looked after, but was quite poorly. Being FIV, we were asked to help and we took him on. Poor Sam loved his food and improved in the short term with proper care and veterinary treatment, but he was never a well cat and we lost him after only about six months to pneumonia. A case of a poor FIV cat who had not had a good background and couldn’t fight off infection like most of our cats would have been able to.

### BADGER (FIV)

Badger came from the same Gloucester vet as Woody and Joseph through the efforts of nurse, Laura.



Our good cat friends Sylvia and Rachel, who have rescued pedigree cats for years, were kind enough to fetch him from death row at the vets and board him for us, as we were unable to take him straight away. We are most grateful for their care of him for some weeks, and our trip to Gloucester to pick him up was one of the highlights of the

summer, seeing all those rescued Oriental cats, dogs and donkeys.

Badger was well named by Laura as he is a large cat with amazing bristly white whiskers. He likes people but is very intolerant of other cats. Most give him a wide berth as he can sound quite menacing. As he likes to keep himself to himself and is in a chalet on his own, he manages to cope quite well

## ROGER (FIV)

Roger ended up at a Cheshire vet when the lady who had been feeding him decided to properly take him on and took him to be neutered and blood tested. On discovering he was FIV she asked that he be put to sleep! What a betrayal!



Roger's saviour, vet nurse Heather, was away when he was brought in and a quirk of fate meant he was still there on the Monday as, being such a character, the vet had not yet put him to sleep. Heather was determined to save this super cat and made many phone calls – as usual, the local shelter didn't want to know.

One of the people asked for help was a sponsor of ours, Roger, as he already had an FIV cat. Being unwilling to take on another, Roger asked our help and brought him all the way down to us.

Roger, (named after our sponsor who brought him to us) is one of life's characters. He was one of the few very acrobatic cats who could get out of the fivery garden. No matter what adaptations were made, Roger would find a way out and come down to the back door looking very pleased with himself. It was just as well that our friend Marilyn from Oxford came to a meeting in Taunton and called to see us; she fell in love with Roger and we knew it was a perfect match. Marilyn already had Charlie Brown (FIV) through us, and three other non-FIV cats.



Heather with Roger

Roger is now called Timmy, and lives in Oxfordshire and fitted in from day one. He has been a very lucky cat, thanks to vet nurse Heather's efforts, Roger's long journey to bring him to Somerset, and to Marilyn for giving him a proper home.

## SAMMY (FIV)

Sammy belonged to an elderly Polish lady, the neighbour of Pete, a cat-loving friend of ours who had given homes to Catwork cats in our past rehoming days.

Sammy was actually called Sally, as his owner thought he was a 'she'. When the lady went into care, Pete was left in charge of the cat; but it became clear that Sally's owner was not going to be able to return home.



Pete's other cats, although tolerating Sally outside, would not allow him in, so we offered

to take him at Catwork. Sammy, as he is now known, has had a makeover as he was such a scruffy little cat, having suffered for years from flea allergy which used to make him scratch furiously till he bled. After being sprayed from head to toe and wormed, we had blood tests done to see what his organ functions were, as his owner had fed him a very strange diet!

Tests revealed no major problems, but he did turn out to be FIV positive!

Sammy is now doing very well, and has put on weight (no wonder, as he can eat for England). When he arrived, Sammy was somewhat disabled, and was unable to get up high, so we moved him into the geriatric area where adaptations had already been made for Molly with the wobbly legs, with extra steps to the various levels. However, after some time on 'Arthriaid' which helps against arthritis, Sammy has become much more mobile, and has now joined the main fivery gang, and even climbs trees!



## TEDDY (SN)

Teddy ended up at a vet's in Midsomer Norton having been found wandering in an industrial estate, blind and deaf!



He had had dental treatment, so had obviously been cared for, but despite efforts to find the owner, no one came forward. The vets tried to get numerous people to take him on – not easy being both deaf and blind – including a Catwork supporter, John Spratley, who asked if we could help.

In some trepidation we agreed as the vet's options were running out fast.

Teddy was duly delivered, and our fears were quickly allayed when we saw how quickly he learnt his way around, including navigating the stairs. His place of choice is Bob's office where he spends most of his time during the day, becoming very vocal when he wants either food or cuddles – he's much more interested in the latter. Bob has had to learn to work at the computer with a contented Teddy on his lap.

Overnight we put Teddy in a puppy pen to keep him safe for the night – good job we have a large living room.

The other house cats have been really good, accepting him into their world; it's as if they realise he's not a threat. So we're pleased we rose to the challenge of a deaf blind cat and that he seems to be doing well. We called him Teddy because he's soft and cuddly!



## BILLY (FeLV)

Billy is leukaemia positive and had a lucky escape when the CP group in Margate knew an acquaintance of ours in Middlesex and phoned to see if she could take him, or they would be putting him to sleep, as so many do. Actually there were two cats, a young one and Billy. Dear June, who does amazing work on her own for all sorts of creatures, especially cats, phoned us for some advice on leukaemia. Barbara asked if she could keep them for three months and then test again – the



only way to be sure if a cat is permanently infected with leukaemia – but not to be surprised if the young one didn't make it.

More than three months passed and Barbara was wondering about the outcome but felt too poorly to risk taking on any more at the time.

It was when we needed June's help to take a cat from a vet in London we got told about, that we heard the outcome – the young one had indeed died, leukaemia being very serious for the young, but Billy she still had.

As we had lost one of our FeLVs – dear tabby Jimmy – we felt we would like to offer to have Billy who had spent a long time by now in the enclosed cattery. Since June had driven across London and rescued the FIV cat we felt one good turn deserved another. How to get 'A' to 'B' was the next question; we had some vague arrangement to meet half way but then, at short notice, June got involved in a "duck rescue" operation in Devon, so she brought Billy down from Middlesex and we met her at the motorway services near us. June and friend sailed off down to Devon, stacked to bursting with carriers for the ten ducks who were duly collected and taken to a sanctuary in Kent – all in the same day!

We brought Billy home and he was really excited at seeing the garden, the rabbit and the three other FeLVs whom he would join when we

had done the second test. We were able to do this almost straight away as more than the twelve weeks had elapsed since his first one – the test did prove positive.

Billy is a really big affectionate cat, and right from day one he has been no trouble at all.

Upon joining the other FeLVs he would dash up and down the garden area in great excitement.

Lovely to have been able to help a FeLV, as many get even less chance of a life after “rescue” than FIVs.

### BERTIE (FIV)

Bertie was found one filthy autumn night, crying under the veg racks of the shop next door to us. The couple who found him came to us wondering if he was one of our cats, which he wasn't. As it was the



night of the evening vet surgery opposite, we took him over to see if he had any ID – he didn't, neither was he neutered.

We gave him a bed for the night and food and put posters up next day, fully expecting someone to claim him, but nobody did. We decided that after a week and no one coming forward, we would get him neutered. However, before this could be done we had to move him to an area not much used and he managed to get out.

Thinking he was probably a local cat who

would know his way home, we tried not to worry, but it was a shame we hadn't got him neutered!

A few weeks went by and we heard of a cat answering to our runaway's description going through cat flaps after food – maybe he was a stray after all.

One night, late, he was brought to the door. Daphne, a cat lover, had found him in the lane near our home and brought him round in her

arms. This time we put him in the fivory on his own and were able to get him neutered. Needing to know what was to be done with him, we got him blood-tested, and – guess what – he'd come to the right place, as he turned out to be FIV positive!

So affectionate and obviously not a fighter, he must have been attacked by a stronger FIV cat and become infected whilst trying to survive.

We named him Bertie after Barbara's father (Albert) as he had originally been found taking shelter under the veg racks of the shop which her parents had built. Albert was a great animal lover and used to fill the home and garden with all sorts of needy stray animals, including an orphaned deer! Obviously, wanting to help needy animals has been passed on in the genes!

Bertie is a real sweetie and craves affection. He's warily finding his place amongst the others and is doing well. Sad that he's obviously known much love and found himself a stray. At least he will now be properly looked after and very well fed.

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## THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2008

### MR CHIPS

Mr Chips was featured in last year's stop press as he died suddenly while the book was being written, suffering from a very aggressive cancer which was taking over his body in a matter of days. He was being operated on for a mass on the leg and the vet found tissue damage spreading everywhere; the cancer was spreading so rapidly that over the weekend the leg had swollen dramatically. Poor Chips was not brought round as nothing could be done for him.



## RANI

Rani had always been one of our favourites – a tiny abused cat when she came, who was very feisty and had to be approached with great care. We had her a few years and she learnt to trust us to the extent that we could even groom her – with care! She died very peacefully in her bed back in the spring from kidney failure. What a great little character!



*Dave offers Rani some chicken, and nearly gets his hand bitten!*

## JEMIMA

Jemima came to us together with Florence (still with us) when the lady who had been fostering them became too ill to carry on. They were meant to be put down on the instructions of the RSPCA, but the vet sent to carry out the sentence couldn't bring herself to do it, so took them back to the surgery where they remained a while until somebody thought of us. We took them on, which was a good thing for Molly who, up until then, had been on her own, being too vulnerable and elderly to "rough it" up with the boys in the fivory. We then had a trio of three old ladies, later joined by Lucky.

Jemima had a few problems from time to time with her mouth, but on the whole enjoyed good health and loved her food! Again she died of kidney failure – one of the most common causes of death in elderly cats (nothing to do with being FIV, of course!)



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## JIMMY

Jimmy was a mature FeLV+ cat when we took him on in 2002. He had no health issues until 2007 when he had very bad mouth problems, which seemed insoluble. We tried just about everything – conventional and other remedies, until we hit upon the homoeopathic remedy nitric acid, which worked a miracle and he had no further problems.



His death in summer 2008 came out of the blue, as is so often the case with adult FeLVs; he died peacefully within a few days. Jimmy first lost his appetite and seemed generally off colour and then just gradually shut down – he too died quietly and peacefully in his sleep. He was a very handsome cat and such a nice character; such a shame after his mouth cleared up that he couldn't have had more time to enjoy eating comfortably again.

## SAM (See NewArrivals)

Sam was poorly when he came to us and was on and off medication during his time here. He had been abandoned when his owner, said to be a breeder with lots of cats, left the area and her cats.

Sam was found by a lady in Minehead, who fed him in her shed until we were approached for help. Sam was a very quiet, subdued little cat with unusual markings. He kept himself to himself and really enjoyed his food. His respiratory problems, sadly, got the better of him and he developed pneumonia. Barbara found him in a bad way at feeding time one morning and he was rushed to the hospital and given oxygen. Despite all the vets' efforts, after a day or two the condition worsened and he had to be put to sleep. A sad little cat with a sweet nature who had never been properly looked after, it would seem.



## CONNER

Conner's sudden and very unexpected death came just before Christmas. Only the night before he had been normal bouncy Conner, eager for his food, and the next morning Barbara found him unable to get out



of his bed and in obvious pain. Luckily the vets' was still open over the road, and Barbara was able to get him seen very quickly. He was taken back to the hospital where an x-ray was taken, which showed no damage to the spine. It seemed, therefore, that we were dealing with a blood clot or thrombosis. Conner was put on a drip and medication given in an attempt to break up the clot – sadly, all in vain. Conner didn't regain control of his back legs. Barbara asked to be present

when he was put to sleep - something we always want to do, as we are the people they know when in a strange place with strange smells. Very, very sad to see such a bright little cat in beautiful condition have to be put to sleep – the true meaning of euthanasia, meaning a “good death” to prevent suffering. The comfort we take from this is that he wasn't put to sleep because he was FIV, at the so-called “sanctuary” in Dorset a few years ago where he nearly ended up.

## DYLAN

Dylan, our other tabby FeLV, followed hot on the heels of Conner and, unbelievably, to a thrombosis! We little thought when we lost Conner so near the end of the year that there



would be another loss. Being that blood clots are relatively unusual, we have been terribly unlucky to lose two cats to this occurrence so close together.

Dylan's end was also dramatic; he had his breakfast as usual, and at

lunchtime Barbara heard some wailing coming from poor Dylan, in great pain and unable to use his back legs. Within the hour he was in the hospital being given painkillers and put on a drip in an attempt to disperse the clot – again, all in vain. Sadly, Barbara could not be with Dylan when he was put to sleep as he took a turn for the worse and became distressed, and the vets always have our permission in such circumstances to do what is the right thing for the cat suffering from something incurable. We had Dylan several years and he always enjoyed good health.

We buried Dylan on New Year's Day. What a sad year 2008 turned out to be! Again, Dylan, being FeLV, was lucky to have had a life at all after being diagnosed – not many FeLVs escape the “rescues”.

## Henry

A little tribute to FIV Henry who was due to come to us before winter set in. His rescuers tried so hard to integrate him with their existing pet, who wasn't having it. They looked after Henry and made him comfortable in their garden shed giving him all the veterinary care he needed. It had been discovered he had a heart condition. Barbara said we would get him in the sanctuary before winter; all was arranged for his arrival when he suddenly died, presumably from a heart attack, a few days before he was due to come here. Thanks to Danielle, who did her best to take him on, he knew love and care after being abandoned.



## Penny

Some of you will remember Penny, found on the Quantocks in a basket outside the public toilets! (hence her name). Old friends and supporters of ours, Margaret and Maurice, gave her a super home and best of care until she died of age-related problems soon after Christmas. Our thanks to them for taking her on. We hear another stray has adopted them – these cats aren't daft, are they!



## UPDATE ON OTHER CATWORK CATS

### THE FIVs



#### CAPTAIN

Captain, our last year's front cover is, we're glad to say, still doing well. We have had him since 1997 when he was approximately 2-3 years old, so he has spent most of his life in the sanctuary, gadding about on his three legs (it was when he lost his leg to an accident that he was tested for FIV and came into our care). The fact that he only has three legs never seems to bother him, except when we see him trying to scratch himself with his missing leg – we oblige by giving him a good scratching ourselves!

Captain is still in lovely condition and during his 'reign' as cover cat, had no health problems.



#### GUY

Guy, a handsome tabby, saved from 'death row' in Bristol, had no health problems in 2008. He has seemed happier living with a smaller number of cats in the 'care for life' house as he gets bothered in a crowd. He has one or two select friends, but is otherwise a bit of a loner.

#### BLACKIE

Blackie, our stray from Weston who was being fed by Stella, one of our sponsors, was in a bit of a state when we took him on, but he has thrived here in the sanctuary and has had a good year healthwise. As long as there's plenty of food on offer and the occasional cuddle, he is coping well with life.



#### JIM

Big Jim, from Surrey, who did so well at first, has not had such a good year due to ongoing mouth problems. He had a dental, followed at a later date by a second, after x-rays revealed that he had roots below the gum line giving him trouble. His mouth still seems to be the main cause of his problems and we have frequently to use anti-inflammatory drops on his food and the homoeopathic remedy nitric acid, which we have found helpful for mouth problems. Unlike Jimmy, our tabby FeLV whom we lost in 2008, Jim is much harder to medicate and is very suspicious of what might be put on his food.

During the period of not eating much, Jim lost a lot of weight, but seeing as he weighed in at 7kg when he came, that's probably no bad thing. These mouth issues are certainly a nightmare for many cats these days. Jim remains his affectionate self and has his chosen friends.



#### THOMAS CORNWALL

Thomas has had a good year and has been very well sponsored both by his rescuer and the Albert Street Vet Clinic in Saltash from where he came as a stray in 2007. Thomas is pretty smart and "easy to run". He has put on weight and seems content with his lot. Thomas loves visitors and the extra attention he gets when they come. Healthwise he has had a good year.



### SPIDER

Spider, one of the earliest rescues we had homed back in 1995 before our specialist work began, came back to us at the end of 2007 and we were having difficulties as to where to keep him, and we tried various options. Being in the house upset him as he likes to be outside; his own chalet in the garden didn't work as he went straight back to his old home (now empty) across the village; then he went in with the geriatrics, which didn't work either. The only place left was the fivory where he seems really happy – he had his own sleeping area until recently, when we needed to make some changes, and it has taken no time at all to get him sharing a chalet with other cats. For a cat of his age he's very bright.

Spider did give us a fright for a while when mysterious patches that appeared had us worried he'd got ringworm – very contagious! A sample was taken and culture grown (visions of the vets hosing down everybody in the fivory!) Thankfully the test for ringworm was negative and the cream we had to administer did the trick. We are so pleased with the old guy who's adapted from being an only cat to living with many others. Although he is elderly, we are not worried about him as he's always been able to give as good as he gets, and all the others 'respect' him!

### CECIL

Cecil, a firm favourite with visitors, has again had a good year. Another "easy" cat who is quietly affectionate and very handsome.



### TABBY PERCY

We have had tabby Percy for many years now and he has enjoyed good health. He did need a dental in 2008, which has enabled him to eat more and better than he did before. He is a sweet little cat and never any bother.



### FLUFF

Fluff, too, had a major dental last year, and while he was under the anaesthetic he was given a makeover, as his Persian type fur is a nightmare and quickly becomes tangled, especially as the cats spend a lot of their time outside. He looked really smart for the rest of the year.

After his dental he became less fussy about his food for a bit, but is now back to his old choosy self.



### DONNY

Donny, who went through so much when his owner nearly starved him to death, and then went on to have major ear surgery after he came to us, last year had a very good year. He is a big solid cat now, and it is incredible to think he nearly died of starvation. He is sweet natured and the fact that he has only one ear doesn't detract from his handsome appearance.



### BATMAN

Batman, or Batty as we call him (our rescue from Battersea), is in fine shape now that he too has had a dental. He eats more than ever now and has “filled out” somewhat.

Batty has always been a streetwise little guy, who knows what’s what, but has his affectionate moments.

### NICK



This dear little Blue Cross rescue (from death row some years ago) has given us some concern this year. He lost weight and tests revealed protein loss from the kidneys, due to all sorts of possible causes which we can’t know.

His treatment was to be put on kidney medication and a monthly injection of laurabolin, which enables him to make better use of the food he eats. Barbara also tops this up with a wonderful homoeopathic remedy – eel serum – which is excellent for maintaining kidney function.

With his monthly trips to the vet where he is weighed and given his jab, we hope we can keep him going for many years yet.

### BRUCE



Bruce we have also had quite a long time. He has had a good year healthwise apart from an ear problem which needed a course of medication.

Bruce, like so many of them, likes to see visitors when he will be more “up front” than he is normally.



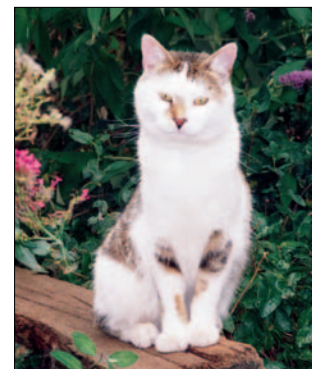
### BOOTSY

Bootsy has always been prone to eye problems, and last year we wore a dent in the path from the house to the fivory when we were putting in eye medication twice a day to try and sort out an eye ulcer. In the end it was decided that another operation (entropion) would be the best way forward as the lashes were beginning to rub against the eyeball again. Once this was done, matters improved.



### TUTTS

Tutts, an old boy, sponsored by Forest of Dean Cats Protection is still doing well, apart from a “blip” when he went off his food (unusual for him) and he was hospitalised for blood tests. Nothing much showed up so we never really got to the bottom of the problem. Apart from some weight loss, which is to be expected in an old cat, he is still looking good and doing well again.



### JASPER

Jasper is the one all the visitors go for as he always makes up to them. He is, however, a typical bully, and although a wimp himself, will always pick on those even less sure of themselves, especially any new ones.

Jasper has had a good year healthwise.



## BT

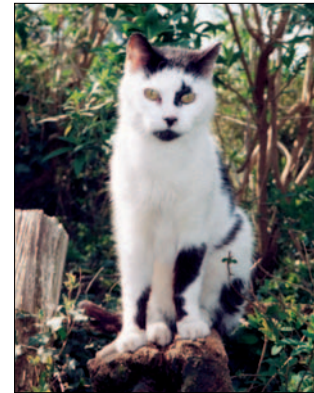
Rescued from a Berkshire vet, within minutes of his life being ended, by a timely phone call, BT has had another good year (he saw enough of vets over the Christmas period two years ago to last him). Why should vets be putting such cats to sleep? BT has gone on to have two years of excellent health. The fact that he is FIV should never come into the equation, yet so many “rescues” are unwilling to take such cats on; thereby condemning them to almost certain death. BT has done well here and is looking fit.

## WOODY



Woody is a greedy cat, and because of this he has to be fed apart from the others or he would gobble up his own and then everyone else's!

Woody is very well sponsored by vet nurse Laura's mum, relatives and friends, including Debbie, our “lady of the pouches” whom we met last year when they came down laden with boxes of pouches which Debbie's fussy felines wouldn't eat – not much gets wasted here at Catwork!



## JOSEPH

Joseph, who came to us in December '07 from the same vets as Woody, has done very well. He was scruffy, skinny, hyperthyroid and snuffly. We didn't think it would ever be possible to have the thyroid removed, but he did so well with veterinary care and good food that he was able to have the operation, and all went well. He is now off tablets, much fatter and, apart from the odd snuffles, has shaken off all the troubles he came with. It is very rewarding to see a cat with quite a few issues on arrival come around in such a short space of time and do so well. So much for FIV having the terrible effect it is supposed to have! FIV cats like Joseph with a few health problems are often put to sleep by ignorant vets even when they belong to somebody. The poor owners often don't know any different and believe their vet; fortunately, others have found our website and contact us for reassurance. Bob emails them, Barbara speaks to them on the phone – between us, we have saved the lives of quite a few pet cats whom we never meet, as well as the strays here at Catwork.

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## THE FeLVs



### GILES (This year's front cover cat)

Despite being both FIV and FeLV, we have had Giles for many years, brought to us by a vet from Devon who moved there from the Quantock Veterinary Hospital (our vets).

Very few adult leukaemia cats make it into rescue centres, since people believe they will soon suffer and die, whereas, it is mostly the young cats under 2 years of age for whom leukaemia is fatal. Adult cats, like the ones we have known at Catwork, can, and do, live for many years quite happily and healthily until the virus "kicks in", then the end is, in our experience, mercifully swift.

Giles has had no major health issues to date, but he did have a dental last year. He's a sweet, timid little cat and we're very pleased to have had him and learnt from him, like all the FeLVs we have had at Catwork.

### JORDAN



Jordan is a nice big black cat whom, like Giles, we have had for many years. He was brought to us all the way from East Anglia. He has had no major health issues, but occasionally he has a sore mouth (stomatitis) like many cats do these days, not just FIVs and FeLVs.

Jordan is an affectionate soul, only getting a bit annoyed when we try and groom him – don't many of them?

The new FeLV, Billy, is very similar to Jordan, and we have to look twice to tell them apart.



### BIG BILLY (See New Arrivals)

Billy came to join us a few months ago, all the way from Middlesex, having been rescued by a Cats Protection group in Margate, who didn't know what to do with him when he tested positive for FeLV. Had not an acquaintance of Barbara's taken him and asked us for some advice, he would have been put to sleep. Billy is a lovely cat with a bushy tail that looked like it should have been decorated at Christmastime!

Billy settled in straight away and has not been a problem with the others.

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## THE OLD LADIES

### MOLLY



We took Molly on some years ago when her owners went to Greece to work with Greek strays, and she was a teenager then. In 2007 it became apparent that she was losing weight, so blood tests were done which revealed kidney problems. She is on medication and special diet, which, unlike many cats, she will actually eat.

Molly is less mobile than ever (her wobbly back legs have meant that her area has always been specially adapted for her) but she is such a plucky little cat and one of our favourites. At present she is managing okay and eating well. Since Jemima died, Molly has become Florence's companion, and they often sleep in the same bed at night.



### FLORENCE

Florence has had a good year despite her age. She has filled out a lot since she has been here. It is nice that she has taken to being with Molly after losing her long-term companion Jemima, the little tortie.

Florence can still be a bit feisty at times but is not much trouble and has no health issues.



### MARY

Mary came from the Deane Vets in Taunton where they have very kindly set up a collection box for Catwork. She came around Christmas time 2007, and lived up to her name – meek and mild. She got over her initial nervousness with us and we put her in with the lady FIVs, but in her own space. She used the top of her mini chalet as a sunbathing roof on the few occasions we saw the sun last year.

Mary had no health problems in 2008.

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### SPECIAL NEEDS



### LUCKY

Lucky, our little calico cat, has had an excellent year considering she was diagnosed with a serious heart condition some while ago. She used to be very nervous, but over time has become quite bossy!

She has continued to be given the wonderful herbal remedy, crataegus, so good for heart conditions, backed up by the homoeopathic remedy eel serum, which is good for kidney function – five drops of each, mixed with a few drops of

mineral water are syringed into her mouth each morning; Lucky doesn't like it, but it certainly seems to have helped her.

Lucky used to belong to a lady who went into a home and was so very nervous of everything that it was almost impossible to rehome her. She ran away from the home and we caught her in our trap and offered to let her stay at Catwork. She's a pretty little cat, getting on in years and has blossomed here.



*Breakfast time in the geriatric area - from top to bottom: Mary, Lucky, Florence, Jemima and Molly*

## THE HOUSE CATS



### SANDY

Sandy, who came to us when her owner died, was at first even more nervous than Lucky, and had never had a relationship with anyone other than her owner. We left her to her self in her own little area and, after a couple of months, she decided we meant her no harm and let us handle her – that was a couple of years ago. Today she is SO bossy and very vocal, especially at meal times which, according to her are always an hour or so before our time of feeding! Healthwise, she has had a vet-free year.



### MAY

May, our little feral cat, remains as aloof as ever; she is absolutely terrified of humans, but tolerates us approaching her to feed her. She has her own little area and sleeps on the hay in her little house, which seems to suit her fine. We catch her out enjoying the sunshine in summer. May seems content in her own little world, and she has the FIVs around for entertainment. Luckily she has had a healthy year.



Life with the housecats in 2008 got complicated because of the age range and different needs of the various nine felines.

Ben is the eldest (18<sup>1/2</sup>) down to little Oliver, now aged one and a bit. In between are diabetic Tom, nervous Billy, Millie who keeps order, Marmaduke and Jack the adolescents, Polly the five-toed agoraphobic and Teddy who is deaf/blind – good job we have quite a big house to enable us to juggle the various needs of them all!

### BEN

After losing his brother William in 2007, Ben became very demanding and very vocal. He became very skinny and all possible tests were run to see if there was an underlying cause, but none could be found; the vet says it is just old age. Ben does have a monthly injection to help him metabolise his food better and powder on his food which does the same. For such an old cat he is doing really well and has lost none of his character. Billy has taken to looking after him these days.



### MILLIE

Millie has had a good year and still looks good for her age which must be about 13; she was brought to us, absolutely terrified, in 1996, aged about 6 months or so. She became the model for the Catwork logo, settling down into a home-loving little cat. She is very sensitive to Barbara's emotions, not very tolerant of the other house cats and the only one to stand up to Ginger Tom. She plays a lot and washes fastidiously.



## GINGER TOM

Thomas was diagnosed with feline diabetes early in the year. At the end of 2007 we realised he was craving food all the time, but tests done then showed nothing. More tests in the New Year when we noticed him drinking excessively, showed the cause. It has been a real leaning curve dealing with a diabetic cat,



and not at all easy, as the amount of insulin, given by injection twice a day, has to be assessed more or less by trial and error. The regular testing required proved difficult as Thomas is a very bad patient; so we bought our own glucose monitoring kit so we could determine insulin requirements ourselves; he also has a special diet.

We thought we'd lost him back in the summer when he went into a coma due to very low blood sugar levels late one night. Cats can easily die from hypoglycaemia, and quickly too. Bob found Thomas outside stretched out, and had to try to get honey into him fast, in order to get the sugar levels to rise again. When Barbara returned from a theatre visit, Thomas was back on his feet again, but only staggering around in a very dazed state. We took him to the hospital on the emergency vet's advice, where more tests were run over the weekend to get him stabilised.

By Sunday, Thomas was back to his usual feisty self and had had enough – trouble was he bit one of the vets who ended up in A&E and was off work for several days!

We learnt a great deal about diabetes from this dramatic and life-threatening incident, and we continue to do our own monitoring, by taking a drip of blood from the ear and putting it on a reader which shows the glucose levels in the blood.

The only thing we cannot do with Thomas is groom him, as he gets very annoyed and we can't afford to be bitten; consequently he looks really scruffy and unkempt now, but at least he is still alive.

## BILLY

Billy caused us problems when it became apparent that he needed a dental – the problem being that he's almost impossible to catch and put in a basket. For this reason, Barbara has to imitate the noises Billy makes (he's always very snuffly) as the vet cannot physically examine him.



The dental work became urgent as his mouth was causing him pain when eating. We had to plan his trip to hospital like a military operation, leaving the basket around in the kitchen for several days before the appointed time, so Billy got used to it being there. On the day, we decided that, when he went to his usual place for breakfast (which he couldn't have, because of the anaesthetic) Bob would make a grab – but this didn't work and we had poor Billy flying round the kitchen in terror. Eventually we got hold of him when he came to rest, slammed the lid shut and reinforced it with extra straps. Barbara spent an agonising day wondering how poor Billy was coping – in the event he was very cooperative, being so scared he 'froze'. While out for the count, we asked for a full check-up to be done and were glad to hear there were no symptoms on the x-ray to cause the snuffles, it was all in the upper airways. Billy needed many teeth removed but since has become a different cat, being much less nervous, even around strangers, and spending most of his time indoors which he never did before. Billy is a sweet soul and loves everyone feline.

## MARMADUKE

"Naughty but nice" sums up Marmie; he's always the wrong side of the door, and always cadging for biscuits. He is very handsome, with a loving nature. Marmaduke was found on the bypass with a shattered leg when approx 8 weeks old and underwent a tricky operation, but made a wonderful recovery; he climbs trees and trips along the rooftop of the fivory better than anyone, but cannot tuck his leg up when sitting. Marmie often has play fights with little Oliver, and loves nature programmes, sitting up close to the TV to watch.



## JACK

Jack is the couch potato of the cat family, who likes his food and lazing about in the heated napper or on the bed. After nearly losing him to bronchial pneumonia in 2006, he has, thankfully, had no repercussions and has grown sleek and fat.



More aloof than the others, he is affectionate in his own quiet way, and 'squeaks' for attention. Jack keeps Oliver amused, chasing him around the upstairs.

## POLLY

Polly, our agoraphobic five toed upstairs cat, came into her own with the arrival of Oliver the kitten Christmas '07 – she looks after him like a proper little mum, washing him, playing with him and telling him off sometimes. She only comes downstairs for a few brief minutes, but keeps an eye on Oliver from the stairs when he's down in the living room. Although Polly doesn't join in with the cats downstairs, she has learnt to put up with various ones invading her upstairs territory, which is great progress as she used to be scared of them all, except Oliver.



## OLIVER

Oliver has now been with us for a whole year, having been found by the postman on his delivery round a short while before Christmas. He's our little miracle as he survived the bitter cold when only about 8 weeks old. We know he had been



out for a few days as he'd been seen eating scraps off a bird table! Oliver is a firm favourite with the other cats; Polly mothers him, Marmaduke and Jack play with him, Millie tells him off, and Ben, Tom and Billy just accept him as one of the gang.



Oliver has lived up to his name and is always ready for more. He's full of fun and games with us, but very scared of strangers. He likes to collect objects, a bit like a magpie, and we have to search hard to find things we've 'lost'.

## TEDDY (See New Arrivals section)

Teddy was immediately accepted into the household by the other cats, who seemed to sense that he's disabled. He is in fact completely blind and very deaf. He sleeps in a pen at night which is kept permanently up in our large front room, but as soon as we open the door in the morning, he climbs the stairs and likes to spend most of the day with Bob in his office, pawing at him every now and then to be picked up for a cuddle. In fact he has become as demanding and nearly as vocal as Ben.



At weekends Teddy is a bit "lost" as Bob is not in the office, and he comes downstairs every now and then meowing and trying to find him. A little cuddle usually satisfies him, then he goes upstairs for a sleep on the landing.

## BARNABY

Our lovely good-natured rabbit had a good year, doing well on his hay, rabbit food and organic veg, which he rushes out to sample. He was intrigued by the deep snow we had, and tried to rearrange it, just as he does the straw in his hutch – we call him Laurence Llewellyn Bun.



### The Catwork Rant

During 2008 we found ourselves wondering what on earth all these fat and healthy FIVs were doing in the sanctuary? The sad fact is that most of them would now be dead if they hadn't come here!

So much ignorance and prejudice still exist amongst vets and rescues. For many FIVs, and nearly all FeLVs, it is all a matter of chance as to which rescue they end up in and whether they are allowed "to be or not to be" – in fact a lottery where the stakes for the animal are very high – life or death.

Any rescue that allows the destruction of a cat, or any animal, when it is not suffering, is not worthy of the name. FIV cats are not "ill" and are going to progress through life, if allowed, subject to catching things from time to time like any other cat.

As we always try to be with a cat when the vet can do no more and it has to be euthanased to stop it suffering, we cannot comprehend how some rescues can let a cat die who isn't suffering, but is merely inconvenient!

A few breakthroughs seem to be happening for the unfortunate FIV cat – the large organisations, with the exception of the RSPCA, are no longer advising putting them down. Policy edicts recommend having them as indoor and only cats or with other FIVs, yet it is still left up to those who run the actual rescues to decide to opt for life or death. We have experience of this with Blue Cross and Cats Protection; their headquarters offer fairly good advice on FIVs, but we know that some Blue Cross centres, and some Cats Protection groups still kill them.

Blue Cross, somewhat ironically, offers a bereavement counselling service – how would they counsel us at Catwork for the unnecessary deaths of FIV cats? Our own Nick came from Torquay branch, when just a youngster, destined to be killed next day, but when one of the

workers asked management to ring us, he was given a reprieve and came to us; he has had several years so far of quality life.

Cats Protection groups vary enormously in their attitudes to FIV - Many groups we hear of do follow headquarters' recommendation to home an FIV+ as an indoor cat, but other groups we know of still put them to sleep.

Battersea Cats and Dogs Home have (hurray) finally changed their policy of putting FIVs down and now rehome them (Batman at Catwork came from there – and we had to plead for his life a few years ago.)

The Mayhew, Celia Hammond Trust, Animal Welfare Trust and Cat Action Trust, who deal mainly with ferals, all have a no kill policy.

A window of opportunity opened briefly for FIVs at a branch of RSPCA where a friend works. As this centre is autonomous and not so much under the domination of headquarters, they tried to give Tiny (FIV) a chance of being rehomed, thanks to the hard work and persuasion done by our friend. Tiny had been living with her sister who was not FIV; in total disbelief that this could be so (showing ignorance of the facts about FIV) the tests were done again – with the same result. The sister was rehomed but the same prejudices remained around Tiny in their rehoming section. Eventually a member of staff took her on, so she was lucky, but no more chances were given to FIVs "in case the person they homed the cat to, let it out"!!

It is as though we were talking about the Black Death of the cat world! The ignorance of many who work in rescue is truly worrying and fatal for the cats who find themselves at a rescue that is FIV UN-friendly.

As for cats found to be positive for FeLV (leukaemia virus) they are even more likely to be put down without even the chance of a second test three months after the first, which would confirm whether or not they were permanently infected.

As for "Sanctuaries" putting down FIVs, this is unbelievable, yet we know it happens. Conner, who died recently of a thrombosis (nothing to do with being FIV) was supposed to be going to a sanctuary in Dorset when his owner had to give him up along with his brother Ginge – the sanctuary hadn't told her that Conner, being FIV, would be put to sleep! We got an email from this place telling us the story the day before the cats were to be taken there. Barbara "blew her top" and we said we would take the two brothers. Ginge was not here

very long before he died of diabetes which he had when he came to us, but had not been diagnosed; he also had respiratory problems. Conner, the FIV, on the other hand, went from strength to strength; he had an eye operation while with us which enabled him to see much better; he grew in confidence and was a real bouncy, vocal, little character. The sadness of his sudden exit from our lives due to a blood clot has been difficult to deal with. Barbara was able to be with him when attempts to disperse the clot had failed; he looked in such good shape it was heartbreaking, but he never regained the use of his back legs. At such times we have to remind ourselves that he did have a life, which he seemed to enjoy, that he would never have had if he'd gone to the so-called sanctuary in Dorset.

Dylan, who died even more recently, also from a thrombosis, was extremely lucky, being leukaemia positive, to have been helped by Bob in Wales who found us on the web and asked us if we would take him. Dylan too had a life here he wouldn't have had in the wrong "rescue".

The picture is more bleak than ever on the rescue front in this current economic climate. Often the family cat (or dog) is the first thing to go. Our own vets were deluged around Christmas with people bringing animals in, and boxes of kittens being found on the doorstep. Rescue centres across the country are being inundated, so for the moment FIVs who take longer to rehome (if they are rehomed at all) are in an even more precarious position.

All these gloomy thoughts gave rise to the poem "Conflict of Choice" born out of one of Barbara's poetry group sessions. It is, sadly, true of what is happening in some places.

## Conflict of Choice

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

In 2008 we became involved with several of our early rehoming. It could be a nightmare finding the right home for the right cat! Anybody involved in rehoming might identify with this “nightmare” poem:

### Day and night of a Feline Fanatic

It has been raining cats all day !  
I've been pussyfooting round the housework,  
Preferring to be with feline friends  
Who have this cathartic effect on me.  
Day is finally over and the magic moment comes,  
Balancing on the catwalk between reality and dream.....

I sit astride my newly tamed cheetah  
And we prowl around the chaos of the night,  
Where the Siamese sing solos,  
The Burmese catch bats  
And the lions purr.  
The white cats turn blue from cold,  
The blacks turn grey from fright,  
The ginger walk gingerly  
As the tabbies turn tiger.

Cheshire cats grin, suspended in the stars,  
Mocking my attempts to rehome them with God.  
After such a catastrophic night of merely catnaps,  
With caterwauling ringing in my ears,  
I long for morning and my catmint tea !



*Brandy (mentioned on page 1), whom we became involved with again many years after rehoming him. He reminded us of the days when we tried to match rescued cats with new owners, before we became a sanctuary*

Our garden, pictured below, reminded Barbara of a Thomas Hardy poem “Snow in the Suburbs”. The last verse seems especially appropriate for those who rescue cats.



*The scene we awoke to one morning - the route to the sanctuary through deep snow!*

### Snow in the Suburbs – Thomas Hardy

*Every branch big with it,  
Bent every twig with it;  
Every fork like a white web-foot;  
Every street and pavement mute:  
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back upwards, when  
Meeting those meandering down they turn and descend again.  
The palings are glued together like a wall,  
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.*

*A sparrow enters the tree,  
Whereon immediately  
A snow-lump thrice his own size  
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,  
And overturns him,  
And near inurns him,  
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush  
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.*

*The steps are a blanched slope,  
Up which, with feeble hope,  
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;  
And we take him in.*