



C.L.A.W.S.

**NEWSLETTER  
WINTER ISSUE 2003**



I cannot believe that the time has flown so fast and that I am writing this Christmas newsletter already. It has been a mixed year with lots of high spots and naturally a few sad days.

November, December and January saw our free neutering campaign in full swing. It was enthusiastically taken up and resulted in our 2003 intake of kittens down by 45%. We are at present offering free neutering again for 3 months and hope that next summer will see only wanted kittens. Having won a very small victory with the kittens, we were hit with a tidal wave of dumped 'oldies'. In the welfare world an old cat is 17 or 18. Unfortunately in the eyes of the general public 'old' is 8 or 9. The usual excuses were given "I'm allergic", "my boyfriend doesn't like the cat", "I'm moving" and more recently "my cat is jealous of the baby". When asked how did you introduce the two I was told, "I threw the cat out into the garden" !!!! This is the sort of selfishness that animal charities have to deal with every day.

Along the way I also take in animals that have been dumped at the vets. One of these was Tom, a beautiful semi-long haired tabby. During the long heat-wave in the summer, this lovely boy, then only a little kitten, was left outside by his owners without food or water. When found he was close to collapse. Luckily a neighbour alerted the police and Tom was quickly transported to the vet, then ultimately to me. Like Topsy, Tom grew and grew and grew developing a huge Basil Brush tail and collar to match. As I speak he is now in a loving home with People who are prepared to take care of him properly.



TOM

This year we have also managed to re-home Victoria. This little cat came to me last June. I remember coming home from a long trip at 6.30 in the morning to find a long A4 note from Ann, my co-ordinator. Always a worrying thing !!!! "Dear Beverley, you have a traffic accident in a pen in your sitting room, a mum with kittens in a pen in your bedroom, and oh yes, an old stray in your office....." Victoria, the mum in my bedroom stayed in the house with me for 4 months. Her kittens grew into big naughty precocious cats and were re-homed. Vicky, however remained cautious and considered me a cat killer. No amount of chicken, prawns, cuddles or catnip would convince this



VICTORIA

little girl that I was not going to roast her for Sunday lunch. Ann, who always likes a challenge, took her on. Very slowly she came round accepting a gentle stroke whilst eating. One year and one month later a loving family came to view her. Well, she fell into their arms as if to say "save me from these vile, cruel people. So much for gratitude !

One of the saddest cases was Barney. He survived on handouts on an estate in Maidenhead. An entire male, he had been hit by a car - and survived. A kind lady had fed him but could not take him in because of her cats. So after neutering and vaccinating him, he came to me for re-homing. Here I deviate, in the course of rescuing animals you love each and every one of them,, then pass them onto other caring people. With Barney he slipped in under the wire so to speak. He came very close to being part of the Gubbins household, 'BUT' there is always a but, a really loving home came up and I let him go. three weeks later, I was told that Barney was in the vets with a Pulmonary embolism. This grand sounding name is for a problem that even puzzles vets. No rhyme or reason is given and you can not tell when it will happen. A lump develops and the lungs fill with water. I happened to be in the consulting room when Barney decided to leave us. I heard him cry and, with the vet rushed into the recovery room. With a heavy heart I held him whilst he died. Sadly there was nothing that the vet could do. This was not to be my week. The next day I had to have a beautiful little cat put to sleep following a positive blood test for Feline Leukemia. This is the down side of animal welfare - sometimes you have to make difficult decisions.



BARNEY

Not only do I have excellent two legged volunteers but also two four-legged volunteers. Graham is a greyhound rescued by Julie, one of my volunteers. He, as you can see, even has his own coat with which to collect money. Graham's tin is always the fullest !!!! It's like an actor playing to the audience. Everyone has come to see him and he poses and postures beautifully, accepting the adulation and pats.

Bear belongs to Frances, and always attends Maidenhead Carnival. she adores people too and for 10p a pat everyone can cuddle her. I have written on her board that at the end of the day collecting lots of money, she love to have ice-cream. During the course of the day she was given three ice-creams by various children. Did she think that her luck had changed !!!!

During the course of the year we have helped out by taking in animals from both the CPL and RSPCA. I am a great believer in the fact that only by working together will Charities make an impact on the ever increasing issue of animal abuse. We accepted a Birman girl. As usual, a fussy eater that Ann had to feed on M&S organic chicken !!! Anyway with a little TLC and Frontline she turned into a beautiful cat and is now living with a kind, caring lady and per partner. Thanks too to Coral at the RSPCA for her kind donation.

As I sit here trying to type this newsletter, I am being watched by rescue cat Pickle. He was dumped in a field during the last very frosty cold spell. The vet thinks that he is at least 19 and very frail. At his age and in his condition there is no way that I could re-home him, so he is joining the family here.



PICKLE

Once again thank you to everyone out there who donates money, collects jumble and gives time to CLAWS. As you know every penny goes towards looking after the cats, so we make the most of every donation. My fosterers continue to nurture the waifs when they come in and I know that they are in good hands. Hot beds and M&S chicken are given freely, without any request for money. A big thanks too to all the volunteers who stand out in all weathers collecting money or standing behind a stall. To our Vet Steve at Kelperland for trying so hard with even the most difficult case. To the staff at Summerlease who help us during the year and especially with our neutering campaign. To Peter at Printique who always helps us with our printing requirements, to Donna at Moss End who alerts us to good deals. Without the support of everyone we could not help so many animals.

This year we 110 re-homed cats and kittens put on site 15 feral cats and helped 60 with their veterinary bills.

Finally, as I read back over this typed newsletter, a big thank you to Debbie. It is she who reads my typing, English like wot it is rite, trys to decipher it and then prints it out.

Everyone at CLAWS wishes all our friends and supporters a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

## Beverley



Just a couple of this year's rescues

## IT THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE FOR HER TO HAVE A LITTER!

How many times have you heard the above comment and wondered why it would be nice for a cat to have a litter of kittens. The ideal of waking up one morning and little Tiddles has had her kittens in the drawer and all is well sadly is not always true.

Cats, and animals in general can have the same birthing problems as humans. An over large kitten getting stuck in the birth canal, mum straining until she is exhausted and collapses, the contractions stopping in the middle of labour, resulting in an emergency rush to the veterinary surgeon for a very *expensive* caesarean. Breach births, cords around the kitten's neck resulting in dead kittens, all of these are not anticipated by most, nor is the cost.

Many people do not realise the cat is pregnant for many weeks and therefore do not supply, or even know of the special feeding a mum to be needs during pregnancy and after the birth.

If the cat is not wormed and de-fleaed regularly these will be passed onto the kittens, remember fleas can, and do, literally suck the blood out of a young kitten resulting in death. All charities have had the telephone call that the kittens are dying or mum has to have a caesarean, and can we help with the bill, homing the kittens, pay for food litter etc. The charities are expected to also pay for the spaying of the cat.

Over the last 25 years I have seen cats suffer during difficult births, and charities take in sad sick kittens. I have witnessed the despair and tears of the volunteers when cats and kittens die despite all their efforts, all because the owners who thought it would be nice for their cat to have a litter, were totally unaware of the potential problems, expense and suffering.

I have not included some of the horror stories we have encountered, but believe me they are out there and very real. So please think, would it really be nice for her to have a litter?

Ann Curtis

Co-ordinator and Chief Kitty Foster Mum

## CONFUSED ABOUT YOUR CAT'S BEHAVIOUR?

was - and thought I should do something about it. It all began when I re-homed Uxbridge who was found in a very bad way on the streets of Slough, and taken in by CLAWS.

I regularly visit the CLAWS cats waiting to be re-homed at the Knowl Hill Cattery, for cuddling, grooming, playing etc., and fell in love with Dennis as I later (rather appropriately) renamed him. He seemed very friendly with both humans and the other cats in the cattery and a perfect choice to join my other two cats Max, a very elderly cat, and Biddy, a rather nervous individual.

Wrong – although careful introductions were made between the cats and Dennis quickly settled in to his new home, he took every opportunity to chase and attack both cats. Max eventually went to live outside, seeking safety in an old shed and a kennel that I bought for him. Biddy was constantly in hiding. I spent many hours keeping them apart and sharing my time with them all. Eventually I turned to a cat behaviourist – Vicky Halls – who is a member of the APBC (Association of Pet Behaviourists) and works in the South of England. With advice from Vicky and another couple of weeks of attempting to create harmony in the home, I finally and with much heartache decided that for the benefit of all, Dennis should be re-homed. The story ended well, as Dennis now has a new home with two dotting owners, and no other animals to compete with. Although a small cat, Dennis is a larger than life character, lavishing affection on everyone and impeccably behaved as an only cat. I visit Dennis and his new owners from time to time, and receive regular updates of his progress.

This was a huge learning experience for me, as the only problems I'd previously had concerned the care of elderly cats and those of nervous dispositions. I wanted to take on more rescue cats, but didn't want a repeat 'Dennis' experience. Vicky Halls had given me a recommended reading list, which included books by animal behaviourists Peter Neville, Clair Bessant and Sarah Heath. After reading up on the subject of cat behaviour and problems in the home, I soon realised that I had been largely ignorant of the world in which my cats lived. I wanted to know more and attended an introductory day course on animal behaviour and welfare, intended for newcomers to the field. This is a course held annually in Salisbury and run by COAPE (Centre of Applied Pet Ethology), website [www.coape.co.uk](http://www.coape.co.uk) for anyone who's interested.

Like many things in life, once you open a door and peep through, you can find yourself drawn in and wanting to find out more (especially if you're nosy like me). Consequently I enrolled for a six month COAPE accredited correspondence course in feline behaviour written and tutored by Peter Neville. This is a course that examines the cat, its view of life, its relationship with man and the problems it can

sometimes pose as a pet for its owners. The course is presented in six separate units covering the history of man's relationship with cats; feline design as a hunter; psychology of how cats learn; the social behaviour of cats with humans and other felines, and how to approach and treat feline behaviour problems. A special study of the student's choice (in my case 'The care and behaviour of the older cat') was also required. Beverley of CLAWS kindly loaned me her library of 'cat books', and I'm happy to say that I've just completed and passed the course with credit, but still feel there is a great deal more to learn.

During the course, several of the CLAWS volunteers and cat owners were most helpful, and I was able to conduct a number of case studies. Beverley and Ann of CLAWS supplied a number of contacts, among whom was Frances – a CLAWS volunteer who apart from having three cats, a dog and parrot of her own, takes in rescue cats who either have or are about to have kittens. I visited Frances at her home where Jessie and her three kittens were receiving lots of love, care and attention. The purpose of that particular study was to describe the behaviour and temperament of a newly weaned litter of kittens, and to relate the behaviour of the kittens to their mother's character and their early rearing environment. It is known that kittens who have a sociable mother and father tend to make more sociable pets, and sufficient contact with people and other animals during the important first six weeks of their life are also likely to make a sociable and friendly pet. It was interesting to note that after finding a home with one of my work colleagues, one of the kittens has settled in very happily with her new family, which includes another cat, a dog and a duck.

More case studies included reports on behavioural problems such as aggression and urine marking in the home. These required much studying and home visits in order to try and analyse and diagnose the emotions and moods of the individual cats concerned and try to establish the causes of the problem behaviour. As we cat lovers know, each cat is an individual and there is no 'one size fits all' answer to the variety of problems that owners experience with their pet cats. The owner in the treatment of behavioural problems needs much patience and understanding. It is often difficult but vital to discover what triggers the problem behaviour. Considerations such as which people or other animals are present, and what happens before, during and after the problem occurs is usually relevant. The history of the problem is also important, such as when and under what circumstances did it first occur? In many cases there may be no single obvious cause and the cat's behaviour may be the result of the cumulative effect of several events. There may not always be a successful outcome to the treatment of behavioural problems, and it is clearly important to consult your vet in order to establish whether there are any physical or medical conditions that may be causing the problem, and require treatment.

When all attempts at treatment have failed or not feasible, the owners may feel the only option is to re-home, and in many cases, especially those involving indefinable stresses, the problem may disappear

completely when a cat is re-homed. This is simply because the old anxieties that caused or maintained the problem are not present in the new environment.

All in all I found the information gained from the course, the relevant reading, and the opportunity to visit various cats and their owners in their homes to be of great help not least in the application to my own circumstances, and an insight into the world of the cat. Fortunately for most cat lovers and owners, the pleasure and companionship we receive from our feline friends far outweighs the odd problem they present us with. They've trained us far too well to let us give up at the first hurdle.

## Gilly Fountain

### This Soul of Mine

"I'll lend you for a little while this soul of mine" God said,  
"For you to cherish while he lives and mourn when he is dead.  
It may be six or seven years or only two or three,  
But will you, till I call him home, look after him for me?"

He'll bring his love to gladden you, and should his stay be brief,  
You'll have a host of memories as solace for your grief.  
I cannot promise he will stay since all from Earth return,  
But there are lessons taught below I want this soul to learn.  
I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true,  
And from the throng that crowds life's land at least I've chosen you.  
Now will you give him all your love nor think your labour vain,  
Nor turn against me when I come to take him back again?"