



Purr 'n' Fur

Mini FELINE FRAGMENTS

**Feline Mini-Fragments is written/compiled by
Patrick Roberts**

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Mini Fragments 1 (2011+)

Short news items of feline interest from today and yesteryear
(page checked March 2026)

▣ Luton, England: May 2012

Denis was one of a litter of kittens born to a stray cat in Luton, in the south of England; luckily someone found and rescued them, although Mum and most of the kits eventually died. Denis survived and found a good home, and like many cats it seems he liked to reward his humans by bringing home 'presents'. In Denis's case, though, they were not dead animals or birds, but all kinds of human accessories such as sandals, Barbie dolls, cardigans, underwear, toys, ladies' slippers and lots of sponges! His escapades began just a week after he was let out for the first time, and eventually his embarrassed owner Lesley had two large boxes full of 100 or so items that people could come to claim! The kleptomaniac feline was featured at [Mail Online](#) (Sept. 2012 – [archived copy](#)), including a CCTV video of him in action, using a hidden camera. He has a [Facebook page](#) ([still there, Nov. 2024, but not used since 2022](#)) and a [YouTube channel](#). Denis became a sponsor for Homeless Cat Rescue Bedfordshire, and was featured on T-shirts sold for the charity.

Update: An attractive-looking and modestly priced little book entitled *The Adventures of Denis Cat Burglar*, 'aimed at children, cat lovers and friends of Denis', was published in late 2017, with part of the proceeds going to the rescue charity that found him. Not long afterwards Denis developed kidney problems and died in March 2018, aged only 6½. Another book, *A Christmas Tail of Giving*, was published in late 2018 to raise further funds for the charity in Denis's memory. [LoveMeow](#) (June 2012) | [BBC News](#) (Sept. 2012)



▣ **Swindon, Wiltshire, England: December 2008**

A few years before Denis's activities (*above*), another cat burglar was two-year-old black cat **Frankie**. Rather than clothes – although he did collect a few socks – his penchant was for stealing soft toys, of which he amassed quite a collection over a year or so. He didn't play with them much: just put them on the living-room floor and went out looking for more. Owner June put up posters asking whether anyone was missing them; no one responded until the local paper, the *Swindon Advertiser*, ran Frankie's story on its website. Owner of three cats Anita, living only a short distance away from Frankie's house, saw the website article; many of her cats' toys had been going missing. Frankie had been going through her cat-flap and helping himself! The mystery was solved, and the missing toys returned. It seems Frankie's appetite for stolen toys eventually diminished.

[Swindon Advertiser 1](#) (Dec.2008 – archived) | [Swindon Advertiser 2](#) Dec. 2008: pay wall) | [Mail Online](#) (Dec. 2008 – archived copy)



© South West News

▣ **Ayning, near Munich, Germany: April 2012**

There were reports in April of a ginger male cat called **Poldi** being found in woods near the city of Munich, some 16 years after he disappeared; he was identified by an old tattoo on his ear. However, it seems he wasn't missing for that length of time after all! He went missing from his original owner after about a year, but was found in the garden of a family some 20 miles (32 km) away. They took him in, but their vet failed to identify the tattoo, so he lived with his new family as their cat for those 16 years, under the name **Burli**! It was only after he disappeared from *their* house that he turned up in woods 15 miles away (24 km) — they have no idea how he got there. It was ruled that his second family could keep him, but his first, original owner had the right to visit him. All's well that ended well for the 'old boy'!

[BBC News](#) (Apr. 2012) | [blog entry](#) (Apr. 2012 – archived copy).



▣ **Dartford, Kent, England: August 2012**

A beautiful tabby kitten, only about 6 weeks old, survived a 2,000-mile journey in a trailer from Turkey and was being cared for by Cats Protection. Named **Yonda**, she spent the required 6 months in quarantine before being rehomed. Staff at the depot where she was found, and the Turkish company owning the trailer, both donated towards the cost of her care. Another cat in the trailer was seriously ill and unfortunately died, but Yonda soon settled down and was doing well.

[ITV News](#) (Aug. 2012).

▣ **Rottach-Egern, Bavaria, Germany:
July 2008**

When Gitti Rauch's neighbour was packing up for despatch a child seat she had sold on eBay, she didn't know that Gitti's one-year-old black cat **Janosch** had decided to take a nap in the crate. The package was duly sent and arrived in Dorsten, over 700 km (450 miles) away in the Rhineland. Luckily, an alert postal employee there noticed that something was alive and moving inside the crate and was able to free the cat. The sender of the package was informed, and told Gitti — but unfortunately her job meant she couldn't travel to Dorsten right away. Janosch was put in a shelter and it was nearly a month before she could go to collect him. She hadn't missed him at first, as he often went wandering for a few days. After his adventure he was said to be staying at home more and enjoying plenty of his favourite 'Wiener Wurstchen' sausage! [Spiegel](#) (July 2008)



▣ **Whitchurch, Shropshire, England:
March 2012**

Five-year-old black-and-white cat **Demi** had a horrifying and life-threatening ordeal when, unbeknown to her family, she was trapped in a spin drier that was switched on with a load of towels inside. She experienced at least half an hour in a temperature of 40 degrees Celsius. When discovered, she was rushed to the vet as an emergency, with a high temperature and very rapid breathing. She was put on oxygen and a drip, and given steroids for her muscles. Fortunately she recovered well physically, but understandably was so terrified of the drier that the family disposed of it. [Mirror](#) (March 2012)

▣ **Felindre, Swansea, South Wales, UK: 2007 / Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA: 2011**

Most cats have 18 toes — 10 on front paws and 8 on the back ones. Ten-year-old **Des** (photo below left) had 26, boasting 7 on each front paw and 6 on each back one. It's said that cats with extra toes were quite common in the nearby former county of Cardiganshire, where they were known as 'Cardi-cats', but polydactyl felines usually have 24 toes and to have more than that is quite unusual. The extra toes are the result of a genetic defect, with that particular gene pool apparently concentrated in south-west Wales. Des's owner Alison Thomas says the extra toes didn't bother him — but he could be temperamental, so people needed to keep well out of the way of all those claws! The record holder for toes is thought to be **Bobbi**, of British Columbia in Canada, who was reported in 2002 as having 28.

Late in 2011 a further 26-toed cat, called **Daniel** (photo below right), was reported from Milwaukee, USA. He took part in a unique fund-raising campaign to raise money for a new building for the Milwaukee Animal Center, whereby people were asked to make \$26 donations, one for each toe! The campaign was very successful, and subsequently Daniel went to live at the Center as mascot. There's a nice video clip of him at [YouTube](#).

[BBC News](#) (June 2007)

(For further polydactyls see Featuring / Miscellany 10.)



Des



Daniel

▣ **Wiltshire, England: January 2012**

Ten-month-old **Fidge** was credited with saving her owner Wendy Humphrey's life by alerting her to a malignant cancer in one of her breasts. Every evening for a couple of weeks during 2011, while Wendy was lazing on the sofa in front of the TV, Fidge would jump up and sit on her right breast — never on the left. After a while Wendy went to see her doctor, as the breast was painful and she thought maybe it was bruised. It turned out there was a lump there, and a hospital scan showed that it was cancerous, leading to months of chemotherapy after which Wendy was due to have surgery. She is convinced she could have died had the cat not alerted her to the problem.

It's known that some dogs can predict epileptic fits, and it's been shown also that they can detect lung cancer from the breath of sufferers, maybe because cancers produce volatile chemicals the animals can smell. That could have been the cause of Fidge's 'talent'; but whatever the reason, Fidge earned a special place in the Humphreys household.

[Metro](#) (Jan. 2012)



See also **Featuring / Miscellany 37** for Halifax dockyard cats.

▣ **Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: 2008**

A small colony of feral cats established themselves on the breakwater rocks on the shore of Point Pleasant Park, near Halifax harbour. Volunteers regularly fed them and kept an eye on them, and the cats — or at least some of them — were given names. Visitors also came to watch them and would bring food. There is a well-made short video about some of them at [YouTube](#), although unfortunately the web link given at the start of it no longer works, so I imagine the Breakwater Cats Rescue League no longer exists. At the time of writing (2011), 2008 was the last date for which comments about the video were made, but presumably the cats were still there.

A comment from 2015 said that just 2 cats, Tar and Ripple, remained by then, and they had been trapped and were living indoors with one of the volunteers.

▣ Boston, USA: 2010

In early 2010 a special little black-and-white kitten was handed in to the MSPCA in Boston as his owners were unable to find him a new home, unlike his litter-mates. The reason was that he was born without hind feet. In every other respect **Nubbins** was a normal, playful, rambunctious kitten, and his impairment seemed to hardly affect him. After some weeks of care and attention he was able to walk relatively normally on the malformed limbs, which developed calluses at the ends of his legs, allowing him to walk safely on carpeted surfaces without needing any other protection. He needed a home with carpets throughout, rather than wood or tiled floors, and preferably without stairs on which he might injure himself. New owners would also need to be able to give him plenty of time and attention, and to have good access to a veterinarian for regular check-ups.

Happily such a home was found, where Nubbins' needs were met. A short video of him playing can be seen at [Love Meow](#) (Jan. 2010). (*The account is there but not the video, Nov. 2024.*) (See **Featuring / Special Needs** for more special-needs cats.)



[Shropshire Star](#) (Feb. 2011 – archived copy)

▣ Shropshire, England: February 2011

One day in 2004 tabby cat **Parsley** went out on her rounds as usual in the village of Tushingham, near Whitchurch, Shropshire, in England's West Midlands, and was expected back a few hours later. She didn't return. The Brownlee family mourned her and gave her up for lost. Imagine their surprise, therefore, when SEVEN YEARS later, in February 2011, they received a call from the local vet's to say a cat had been brought in and the microchip showed it belonged to them. It was Parsley! Where she had been remains a mystery, but she appeared in good health and clearly she must have been looked after. The family, while hardly believing their good fortune at having her back, were hoping that perhaps someone would come forward to shed some light on Parsley's seven-year absence.

▣ Prestonpans, Scotland: 2004

At Hallowe'en 2004 the Scottish town of Prestonpans officially pardoned 81 people, and their cats, who were executed centuries ago for witchcraft. In times of political intrigue and religious excesses during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some 3,500 people, mainly women and children, were executed in Scotland, along with their cats. The evidence was usually flimsy; owning a black cat could be enough, or making your own home-made remedies — sometimes prosecuting witnesses claimed they heard 'spirit voices', or felt the presence of evil spirits.

Prestonpans had one of the largest numbers of witch executions in Scotland. Many were carried out within the jurisdiction of the Baron Courts of Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun, and Gordon Prestoungrange, the 14th Baron, granted the pardons in the last session of his court, due to be abolished at the end of the following month. 'The court declared pardons to all those convicted,' he said, 'as well as to all the cats concerned.' Fifteen local descendants of some of those executed were invited to attend the ceremony.

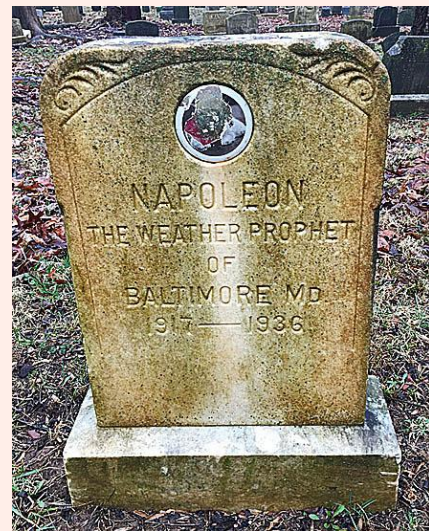
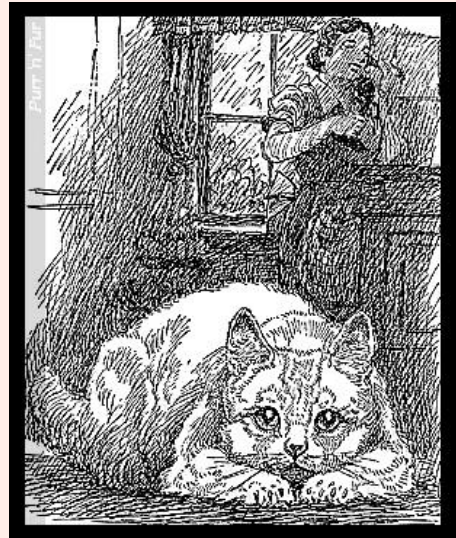
[For justice](#) (Dec. 2004)

▣ Baltimore, Maryland, USA: 1930

It hadn't rained for over forty days and forty nights in the long, hot summer of 1930 — and was not expected to — when the phone rang one day in the office of the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper. A lady called Mrs Fannie de Shields confidently announced there would be rain within 24 hours, because **Napoleon**, her 9-year-old white Persian cat, had predicted it. He had assumed a certain position, she explained, crouched on his stomach with his head down between his front paws, and when he did that you could always count on a change of weather. He had possessed this gift since kittenhood, she said. Needless to say, the newspaperman taking the call was somewhat sceptical — but within less than 24 hours it was raining buckets. Napoleon's reputation was made and reporters and photographers flocked to his door, although he preferred women reporters.

Over the next six years, unless he was ill, he would successfully predict weather changes, such that farmers and hikers would ring up to get his advice. He became renowned throughout Maryland and beyond; more than a few times he flatly contradicted the Weather Bureau and was proved correct, leaving officials red-faced. Napoleon died peacefully at home in 1936 aged almost 19, and was buried after a short ceremony in Aspin Hill Memorial Park, a pet cemetery in Silver Spring, Maryland under a headstone inscribed 'Napoleon, the Weather Prophet of Baltimore, MD, 1917–1936' (*right*). The *Baltimore Sun* headlined his obituary 'Napoleon, the Weather Cat, has Forecast Last Storm'.

[Pet Cemetery Stories](#) (Feb. 2018) | [YouTube](#)



▣ Japan: 2011

There are innumerable funny cat clips on YouTube, but we thought these two, apparently originating in Japan, were irresistible. Scottish Fold kitten **Munchkin** (*no longer at YouTube: link goes to article without video*) stands on his haunches to investigate a tempting plate of meat; and **Maru** seems to be obsessed with clambering into boxes, no matter how small! See another video [here](#), and Googling 'Maru cat in box' will bring up several similar clips. Maru's tail waves enthusiastically throughout his box adventures!

There are many other YouTube videos of Maru, e.g. [YouTube 1](#) | [YouTube 2](#) | [YouTube 3](#). Maru died from cancer in September 2025, aged 18. [Love Meow](#) (April 2010) | [Wikipedia](#) | [Yahoo](#) (Sept. 2025)



▣ Glasgow, Scotland: 2004

When a fire started in the Glasgow home of well-known TV designers Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan, their cat **Felix** raised the alarm by constantly meowing. Apparently sunlight had bounced off a goldfish bowl, which had acted as a giant magnifying glass, causing a table in the lounge to burst into flames. For his prompt action, Felix became the first animal to receive the Scottish Executive's 'Don't Give Fire a Home' fire-safety award, established in 2003. He was presented with a special certificate, a specially branded medal and a new food bowl by representatives from Strathclyde Fire Brigade. Colin said: 'Felix is a true feline hero and we are immensely proud of him.' And the fish? They were unharmed.

▣ Belfast, Northern Ireland: 1912

Facts about the ill-fated liner *Titanic*'s cat are hard to establish, especially now that there are no living survivors. One version says there was a ship's cat called **Jenny**, who had kittens on board and they all perished with the ship. However, another quite different version tells of a cat at the shipyard having kittens before the ship was launched, and then becoming *Titanic*'s cat and sailing with her during trials. But when the ship docked at Southampton prior to embarking on her maiden, and only, voyage, the cat removed her kittens one by one and left the ship. An Irish crewman who had been assigned to look after the cats took that as a bad omen and also left, claiming the cats had saved his life. See [Feline Folios](#) for a fictionalised telling of the tale; and below is a painting by Celia Pike, imagining Jenny and her kittens watching the sailing of the *Titanic* on her fateful voyage (although there seem to be rather a lot of kittens!).



▣ Boston, USA: January 2010

The Espinosa family was trying to work out how their pet cat **Sal** was summoned for jury duty. They thought the mix-up arose because on the last Census form, Anna Esposito listed him under 'pets'. 'I just wrote "Sal Esposito", scratched out the "dog", and wrote "cat",' said Anna. When the summons arrived, she filed for Sal's disqualification of service on the grounds of 'Can't speak English', but the jury commissioner was unmoved and demanded the claim be put to the test. Sal's service date at Suffolk Superior Court was set for 23 March — but in fact the matter was sorted out before then and Sal didn't have to appear! For some reason the story was picked up again by the media a year later, but the events took place in early 2010, not 2011.



Some doubt has been cast on the truth of this story; see [here](#) (Apr. 2020).



Apollo,
Asian leopard cat,
father of the kittens

Two of the new
breeding line of
Bengal/leopard cat
kittens



▣ **Scotland: 2005**

Early in 2005 it was reported that a new feline bloodline had been created by the mating of a Bengal female cat, **Zamba**, with a male Asian leopard cat called Apollo — one of only five such breeding males in the world. The one male and three female kittens in the litter were classified as F1, meaning they were the first generation derived from wild blood. The Scottish family who owned them also had a female leopard cat, but didn't plan to breed from her.

The female kittens could have been worth between £60,000 and £80,000 each at the time, but the owners didn't want to sell them in Britain, preferring to maintain their uniqueness as the only ones in the country. They would sell the male, though, as the first three male generations would be infertile.



▣ **Zermatt, Switzerland: 1950**

In September 1950 there was a ten-month-old kitten at the Hotel Belvedere, which is situated at a height of 10,800 feet (almost 3300 metres) near the famous Matterhorn, in Switzerland. The youngster is said by most accounts to have belonged to a climber who was going to climb to the mountain's summit the following day, although others say he was the hotel's cat. Whichever is the case, when the climber left at dawn with all his gear and accompanied by the rest of the climbing party, he thought he had left the black-and-white kitten behind to await his return. But the kitten had other ideas! After an arduous climb to the 14,700-foot (4478 metre) summit, involving two nights spent in huts on the way up, the kitten joined in their celebrations on reaching the summit. **Matt**, as he was subsequently named, had followed the party all the way, including the ascent of steep rock faces. He was very hungry and thirsty, but otherwise just fine; the Italian guide felt he had earned a break and carried him much of the way down in his rucksack — but to the village of Breuil, on the other side of the mountain. There he stayed, despite the hotel's pleas that he be returned to his original base. During the following winter another guide reported that Matt was still in Breuil — but had been stuffed and was adorning a restaurant. An alternative [version](#) (June 2015) of the story says he returned to Hotel Belvedere and lived out his days there.

[One Hundred Mountains](#) (Feb. 2013)

[Tomba](#) was another Swiss cat whose regular mountaineering exploits over four years made him much better-known, and see also **Ginger** of New Zealand later on this page.

▣ Prince Edward Island, Canada: 1997

In October 1994 32-year-old Shirley Duguat disappeared from her home in the town of Summerside; only her blood-spattered car was found. Then, in some woods a man's leather jacket was discovered, also with Shirley's bloodstains – and a few stiff white hairs. They were cat hairs. RCMP Constable Savoie recalled seeing a white tomcat at the home of chief suspect Douglas Beamish, an ex-con and sometime boyfriend of Shirley's. If the hairs could be shown to belong to that cat, **Snowball**, it would tie Beamish to the crime scene. It proved very difficult to find a lab that could identify feline DNA, but eventually one was located in Maryland, USA. With the aid of a blood sample from Snowball, and from 20 other neighbourhood cats in case any should have similar DNA, it was shown that the hairs on the jacket belonged uniquely to Snowball. In 1997 Beamish was convicted of the murder and sentenced to 18 years without parole.



[Nonfiction Minute](#) (Apr. 2022 – archived copy)

[New York Times](#) (Apr. 1997 – archived opy) | [Wikipedia](#)

▣ Cornwall, England: December 2008

At 27 years old, a black cat called **Mischief** was reported to be still living up to his name despite 'slowing down a little', according to his owners, who obtained him as a kitten in 1981 and still had photos of him as a youngster at Christmas that year. Nearly three decades on, 'He has become an indoor cat now, but still has a spring in his step,' they said. 'He still manages to jump over the stair gate and he's round your ankles constantly for food.' A spokesman from Guinness World Records said a ginger cat called Spike was the previous feline to hold the title of the UK's oldest cat, but he died aged 29 in 2001, since when there had been no further official record holder. The oldest cat ever was **Creme Puff**, who was born on August 3, 1967 and lived until August 6, 2005 – an amazing 38 years and three days. She lived in Austin, Texas.

(See Featuring / Miscellany 7: Record holders)



▣ Germany: January 2009

Leading weather forecaster for German TV Jörg Kachelmann had just started his two-minute prime-time slot on national TV, warning Germans to wrap up warmly on the coldest night of the year, when a shadow and the tip of a tail moved across the bottom of the screen. **Lupin**, a colleague's cat, had wandered into the studio and was rubbing around his legs. Thinking viewers would wonder what was happening, and that cats don't like being ignored, Kachelmann scooped up the cat, which nuzzled his beard and gazed at him while he completed his forecast without missing a beat. He ended with a comment that he hoped cats had thick fur to protect them during the night. The episode can be found widely on the internet, such as this clip at [YouTube](#); there's a series of still shots of Lupin [here](#) and Kachelmann talking (in German) about the cat [here](#).



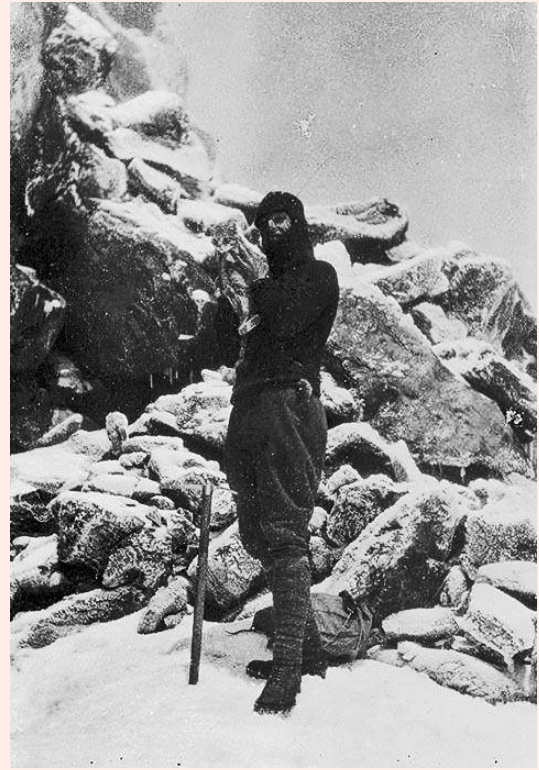
USA: April 2020

During the coronavirus crisis of 2020, chief meteorologist for 14 First Alert in Indiana, USA, Jeff Lyons, set up a green screen in his home so he could continue to broadcast. In April 2020 his 10-year-old cat **Betty** became curious one day about the new set-up and wandered in, so he scooped her up and continued his broadcast. People loved it, and so he began to feature her as co-presenter! They soon gained fans in various parts of the world, and Betty had her own [Instagram](#) account (*last used November 2023, when Betty's death was announced.* She was 16.) [Washington Post](#) (April 2020)



▣ New Zealand: January 1917

From 1910 to 1919, **Ginger** the cat lived at the North Egmont Mountain House with manager and guide Harry Williams, who had rescued the kitten from the bush. Ginger was popular with visitors to Mount Taranaki and regularly followed tramping and walking parties. 'He was a lovely fellow and naturally came in for a lot of attention from guests who read of his exploits in the New Plymouth papers of the time,' Mr Williams wrote. On 16 January 1917, Ginger became the first feline to climb unaided to the summit. The party was guided by Mr Williams, who took photographs of the top cat and made him up a certificate verifying his ascent. 'He was never happy unless he was wandering around the mountain, even though it cost him great pain after his trips across the snow. It was nothing unusual to see poor old Ginger lying on his back with his paws in the air, they were so frost-bitten.' There's a copy of a testament to Ginger's ascent in the [Puke Ariki](#) collection (link undated) at New Plymouth. See also **Matt of Switzerland**, above.



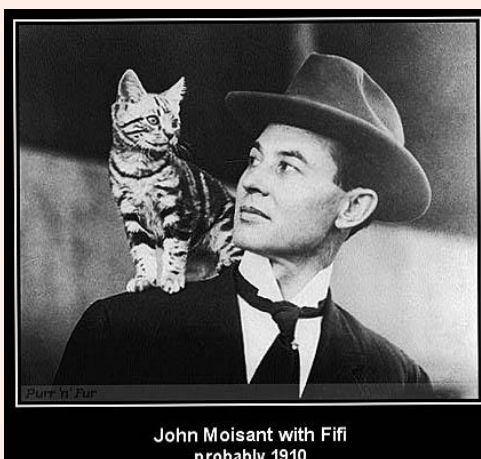
▣ Shropshire, England: 2004

We've all heard of the cat that got the cream, but in October 2004 **Cloudy**, the 16-year-old cat of Mrs Bess Driscoll of Shropshire, England, got some fruit salad to go with it. Bess opened a tin of Cloudy's favourite Whiskas Supermeat, only to find the tin was full of fruit salad! Cloudy was not impressed. Bess said, 'I couldn't believe my eyes. If the labels got mixed up, I feel sorry for the person who thought they were buying fruit salad! They would have had a nasty shock.'

▣ Paris, France: 1910

In August 1910, on the first plane flight across the English Channel to carry a passenger, American aviator John Moisant flew from Paris to London accompanied by both his mechanic and his cat, named either **Mademoiselle Fifi** or **Paree**, depending on which newspaper you believe. The feline accompanied him on nearly all his flights — 14 are documented — earning Moissant the nickname 'Captain Kitty', and he did everything possible to make her comfortable when flying. Luckily for Fifi she wasn't aboard when in December 1910 Moissant crashed his plane near New Orleans and was killed; he always refused to wear a seatbelt. In the image of Fifi in a basket, she's dressed in mourning attire while attending her master's funeral.

- Smithsonian *Air & Space* magazine: [The Daring Mr Moisant](#) (Dec. 2010) | Wikipedia: [John Moisant](#)





Featured feline at the head of the page and above, and companion through Mini-Fragments, is Midge (short for Midget, as she was so small when she arrived with me in 2003). She came from the same place as Maggie (see Fragments), but they weren't sisters and Midge was a little younger. Seeming to be slightly prone to accidents, minor ailments and misadventures, Midge was nevertheless a cat of real character and it would be impossible here to describe all her quirks and funny ways. Suffice it to say she was very much 'my cat' and a little treasure. A particular pleasure she liked to indulge as often as possible was to climb on my shoulder, purr like mad and knead her paws! I missed her greatly (and still do) when she was put to sleep following a stroke early in 2018, aged nearly 15.

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