

Featured Felines: Miscellany 16 (2013/2022)

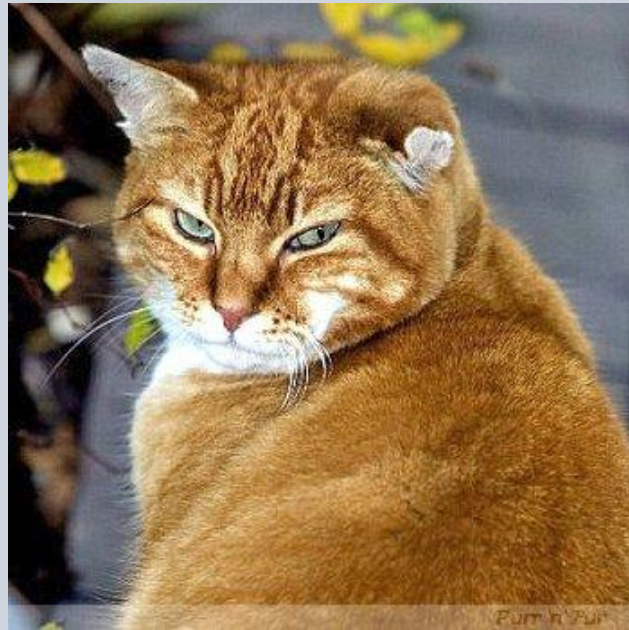
(page checked July 2026)

Olly of Manchester Airport; Robert the allotment cat

Olly

(Olivia)

**Manchester
Airport,
England**

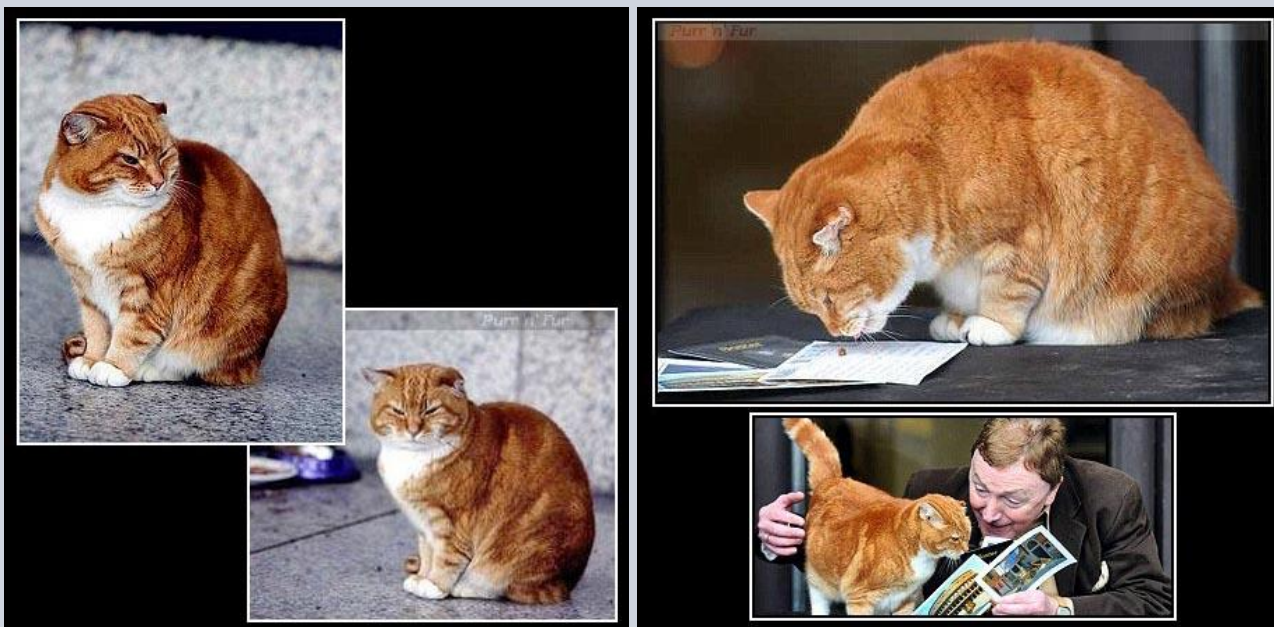


Early in 2007 a rather scruffy-looking ginger-and-white cat with no collar and a torn ear was spotted wandering near Olympic House (*below*), the main office block at [Manchester Airport](#), one of the UK's busiest. However, despite his down-and-out appearance office workers and air stewardesses fell in love with him and named him **Olly**, after Olympic House. It wasn't long before he appeared on the internet, gained a Facebook page — and even started to receive food parcels from admirers in places as far away as New York, Chicago and Paris!



Airport staff clubbed together to buy him his own 'executive lounge' — a luxury cat-box. Bob Molloy, a receptionist at Olympic House, said: 'Air crews give him a feed early in the morning, and staff from the airport and its service partners look after him throughout the day. He's a big talking point around here; everyone likes him.' Some workers even went in on their day off to feed him. Hazel Williams, who also worked on the reception desk, added: 'He's a very special cat — and a lucky one, too.' Staff from several companies who work at the airport — even the sandwich-delivery man — all helped to make Olly's days more comfortable.

In 2008 it emerged that bosses were considering moving the cat on — but hundreds of people signed a petition to keep Olly at the airport, with supporters from as far afield as New Zealand and Kuwait voicing their anger at the rumour. Management eventually decided to grant the much loved moggy a permanent visa to stay.



However the following year, in October 2009, a routine visit to the vet revealed that Olly was actually female! Bob said, 'We were completely shocked when we found out and just couldn't believe it. We thought it was a bit unfair to carry on calling her Olly, so we changed her name to **Olivia**. Since we found out, we've heard all the jokes from staff and some of them say we shouldn't be surprised, as she's always been a bit of a diva. The funniest thing is we actually think her character seems to have altered since we found out — she's much more loving and seems to be showing her maternal side more.' Hazel said Olly's new identity had taken staff by surprise, but if anything it had added to her appeal. She said, 'Every day we get people coming in to leave gifts for Olivia. The other week someone had been fishing and brought in a whole mackerel, which they had even cooked for her. It's incredible how well-loved she is, and we're already expecting people to start leaving Christmas presents for her.' And an unknown admirer even sent her postcards from holiday destinations (*above right*). [*Olivia is still called 'Olly' in this account, as she was still widely referred to by that name—Ed.*]

In July 2011 airport bosses said that Olly would, finally, have to be found a new home away from the airport. They said they had no option but to move her because of building work that was due to take place shortly at Olympic House — the airport's main office block, between Terminals One and Three. Olly by then lived in a cat kennel just outside the office entrance and bosses said she would be disturbed by refurbishment work in the reception area. A spokesman said they had consulted a local animal sanctuary and the RSPCA, and both had recommended she be found a new home. Other options were considered, such as 'retiring' her to the airport's runway visitor park — but the site was deemed unsuitable as she was ageing and would need to move again within a couple of years; and they also thought about finding her temporary accommodation until the work was complete, but the animal welfare experts said that would be too unsettling.

The advice was therefore taken to permanently relocate Olly to a home where she wouldn't be disturbed again. She was found a comfortable retirement home at an undisclosed location in south Manchester — a Facebook comment at the end of July noted that 'they moved her during the night when no one was about' — so she effectively retired from public life.



Earlier the same year the low cost airline [BMibaby](http://bmibaby.com) had instigated on its Facebook page an online competition to name one of their planes, inviting suggestions from holidaymakers: the name had to end with 'Baby'. Inundated with entries, the resulting shortlist included 'Olly Cat Baby' after the airport moggy. Olly's friends at Olympic House mobilised support via Twitter and Facebook campaigns to rally votes, and her name was the runaway winner. It was added just below the plane's cockpit, and carried to destinations all over Europe.

Little more than a year later in May 2012, however, the takeover of BMibaby was announced, with

the last flight scheduled for the following September. It therefore seems unlikely that the aircraft still carried Olly's name, but the photo (*above*) dates from October 2011 when it was present (*courtesy Alain Durand: see it full size at [Flickr](#)*).

Olly had a [personal page](#) (*little used since her death in 2015, but someone adds posts each Christmas*) at Facebook which was begun during her time at Olympic House. When the powers that be decreed in mid-2011 that Olly must be relocated, a separate Facebook group, [Bring Olly back to MAN!](#), was formed to campaign for Olly's return. It wasn't successful, but in October of that year a message was posted on her behalf: 'To all my friends, do not fear. I am very well, living a life of luxury and undertaking some select security-cat duties. Have taken to indoor living like a duck to water. Enjoy sleeping on knees, sofas, chairs and the bed. Totally spoiled and I am loving it. In other words... sorted. Xxx.' The welcome news of Olly's new and happy home life seemed to be borne out by a photo posted to her page at Christmas 2012 (*olwer left, next page*), although no further information was provided.

Links

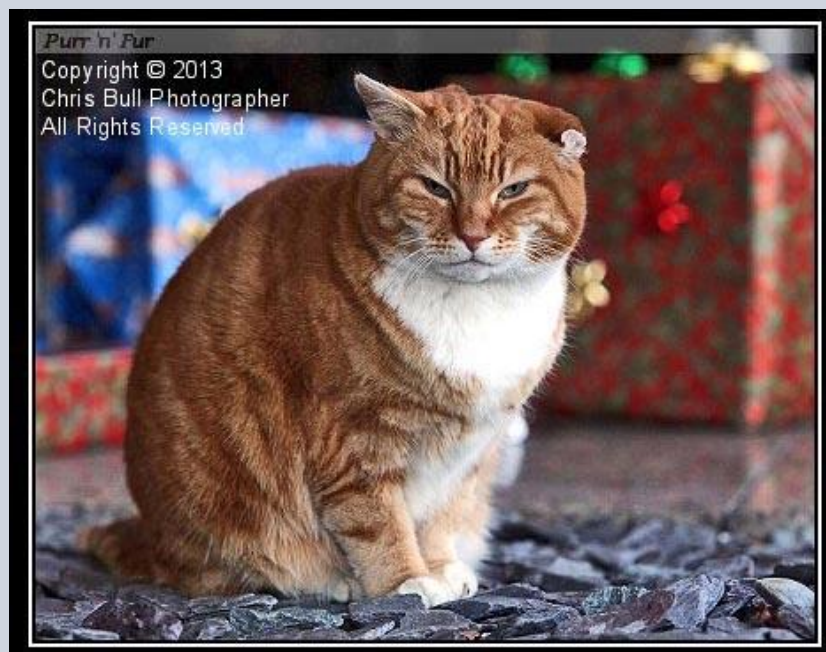
- *Manchester Evening News (MEN)*, Nov 2007: [World fame for airport cat](#)
- *MEN*, Dec 2007: [Olly to get turkey dinner](#)
- *MEN*, Oct 2009: [Goodbye Olly, hello Olivia as airport cat reveals a secret](#)
- *Metro*, Jan 2011: [Stray cat bombarded by postcards from admirer](#) (the *MEN* also covered the story).
- *MEN*, Jul 2011: [Claws come out as Manchester Airport chiefs show exit door to Olly the cat](#)

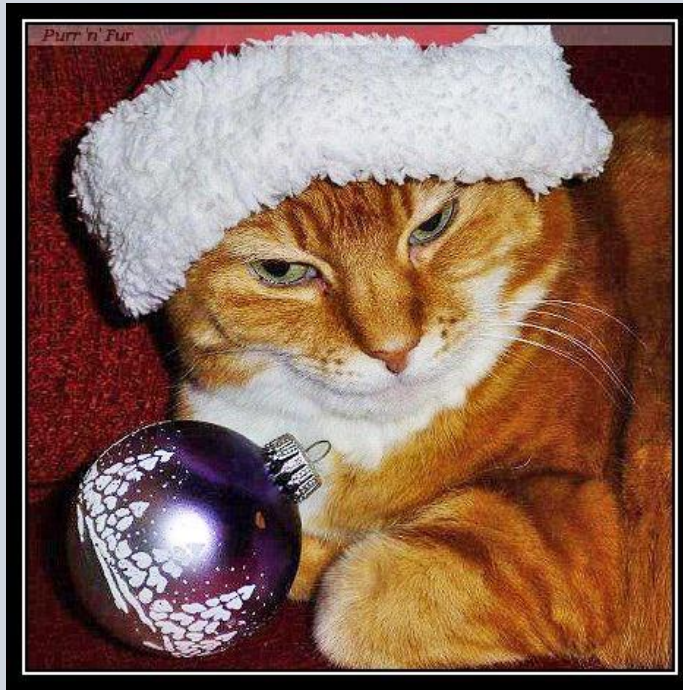
Update: Olly died in May 2015 from a pneumonia-type lung infection that vets had been battling for some days, but in the end she wasn't strong enough to overcome it and died in her human Jennifer's arms. There were hundreds of tributes on her Facebook page; some people wanted to make a donation in her memory, so a fund was set up to benefit three animal charities near the airport where Olly had made a name for herself.

Jennifer said, 'She loved her cuddles, and she'd wake me up at silly times in the morning in line with the times the buses used to bring staff into the airport for their shifts. She was "wired" to get up then, because she'd get so many cuddles!'

Apparently Olly was cremated and her ashes were scattered in Stanley Forrest in early September 2015 with a small memorial celebration. A 'small memorial plaque' was mentioned, but I've no further information about that.

[Manchester Evening News](#) (May 2015: Olly's death)





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Robert the Allotment Cat (2023) Perry Barr, Birmingham



The Walsall Road allotments in Perry Barr, Birmingham, UK provide an oasis of calm in the middle of the city, especially valued during the coronavirus lockdown, and by people who don't have their own garden. They're used by people from around 20 different countries, and crops, flowers and vegetables have been grown there since the early twentieth century..

In 2017 a black cat started to frequent the site. Nervous at first, he soon settled down and turned out to be a very friendly cat, making friends with complete strangers even if they didn't much care for cats. He was named **Robert**, and his exploits around the site were reported on a Twitter page

that gained some 40,000 followers from many parts of the world. He tweeted to his followers every morning, and some even made a point of going to visit him. When Robert needed expansive surgery for eye ulcers in late 2021, his fans stepped up and raised around £10,000; that was more than was needed and the extra was put towards the welfare of the other cats that lived at the site.

As well as the cats there are chickens and other wildlife – so it was a huge threat when the city council planned to redevelop it in connection with the 2022 Commonwealth Games that were to be held in the city. Robert and his supporters sprang into action, campaigning long and hard on his Twitter account and on other social media. A petition gained thousands and thousands of signatures, the media got involved, MPs and other notables visited to meet Robert – and in the end the council relented and said the allotments would stay. Robert had prevailed!



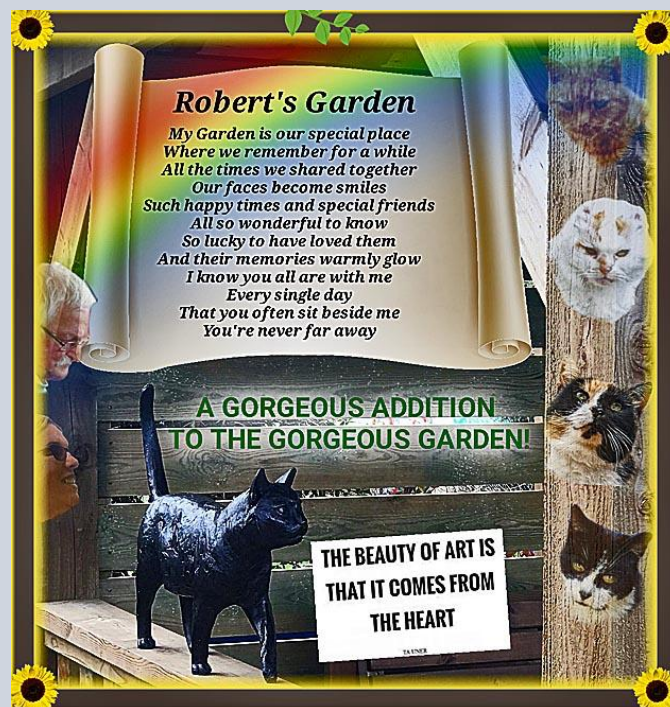
*(top) Janet, Dorothy, Gloria Glover, ET;
(below) Red Fred, Robert, Barbara*



Very sadly, in early April 2022 Robert was mauled by a greyhound and died from his injuries; I don't know the circumstances, but apparently the dog's owner was mortified. A memorial garden has been dedicated to Robert at the allotments, and a campaign was begun to raise money for a statue. That was successful, and in April 2024 the statue was unveiled; it was created by Tanya Russell, who made the memorial sculpture of Streetcat Bob in London (*below*).



[ITV News 1](#) (May 2021) | [ITV News 2](#) (April 2022: death) | [Robert at Facebook](#) | [Facebook photo](#) (June 2022) | [Twitter](#) (still in use mid-2026) | [Katzenworld](#) (April 2019)



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