# Mini Fragments 4 (2021)

More short news items of feline interest from today and yesteryear.
*(page checked April 2026)*

## New South Wales, Australia: 2020

Jennifer Boyle lives in north-eastern NSW and devotes much of her time to looking after rescue horses, one of which is Champy. One day Jennifer was at an animal shelter when she came across a black kitten who had been quite sickly; he'd been born at the shelter and was still there after several months. 'He wouldn't take his eyes off me,' she said. 'I was his chosen human.'

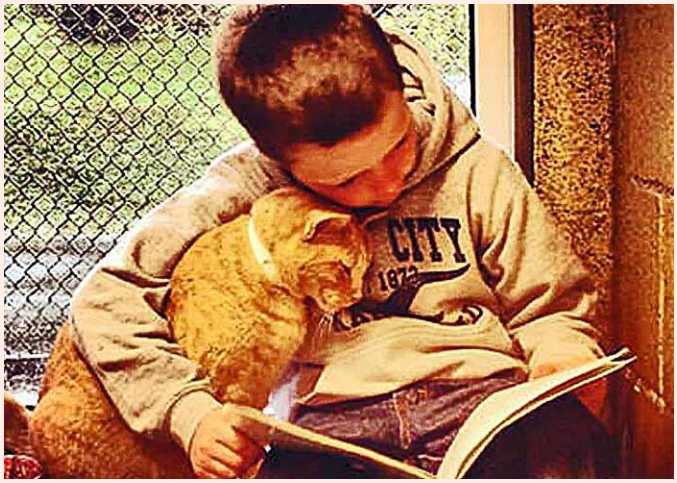
She took him home and named him **Morris.** Champy was introduced to the new arrival and took to him straight away. Morris took a little longer, maybe because of Champy's size, but after a few days he jumped onto the horse's back, and they've been inseparable best friends ever since. They hang out together, and most days Morris will go out for a ride on his friend's back – he has his own saddle pad. And unlikely as it may seem, they even groom each other!

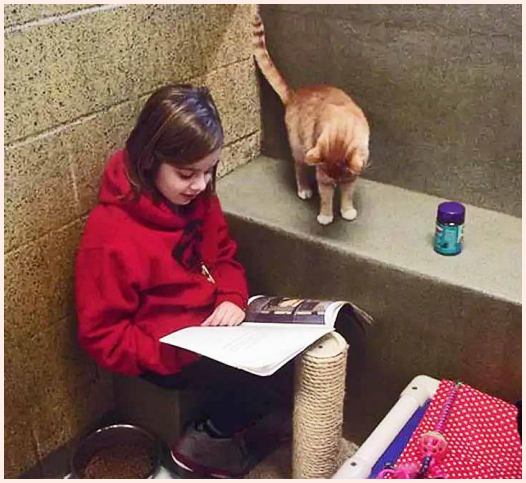
ihearthorses (June 2020) | Bored Panda *(Jan. 2015 – archived copy)* | Instagram *(still active April 2026)* | YouTube – various clips

### Berks County, Pennsylvania, USA: 2014

The Animal Rescue League of Berks County initiated a programme in 2013 whereby children in Grades 1 to 8 (roughly aged from 5 to 12) who are able to read at any level could go to the shelter and read to the cats in the adoption room. It helps to soothe the cats, who love the attention, and helps the children with their reading, particularly less advanced ones who might be nervous or hesitant about reading in front of adults. 'The programme will help children to improve their reading skills while also helping the shelter animals.' said the League. 'Cats find the rhythmic sound of a voice very comforting and soothing.' I think the programme is still operating in 2026.

LoveMeow (Feb. 2014) | Berks Art (undated)



### Rome, Italy: 2012

After the temple ruins of Largo di Torre Argentina were excavated in 1929, feral cats were drawn to the area for shelter, and were fed by locals. In the 1950s the old warehouse where archaeological tools had been stored was found and became a base for feeding the cats. Over the years the project grew and evolved until it became an established sanctuary, with volunteers feeding the cats every day, keeping an eye on their health and – importantly – neutering and vaccinating them, and even finding homes for them where possible. It's also become something of a tourist attraction in its own right..

In December 2012 the shelter was threatened with closure when national heritage and archaeological officials declared it was unsanitary and didn't have planning permission – claims denied by the volunteers. The mayor of Rome stepped in, saying, 'These cats are not up for debate; they are part of the history of Rome. This is a praiseworthy, historical and wonderful enterprise. The feline colony must not be hounded out. Woe to those who lay a finger on our cats.' In addition a petition to keep the sanctuary was signed by thousands of people. So it remained, and still remains, although the threat of eviction has never entirely gone away.

There's an account of the colony at Wikipedia, and the sanctuary has its own website, See also Raw Story *(Dec. 2012 – archived copy).*

### Manly, Sydney, NSW, Australia: 2014

**Dusty** became a well-known figure in the beachside community of Manly, a suburb of Sydney, where he lived in an apartment with his human Valerie Nguyen. Rather than just having him as an indoor cat, Valerie had the idea from a friend of getting him a pram, a stroller, so he could be outside and enjoy the sights, smells and sounds. 'He's well-behaved,' she said. 'A lot of children, especially, notice him and come to say hello.'
*Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 2014)

### Ludlow, Shropshire, England: 1980

British Blue kitten **Frodo** was given to restaurant owners Chris and Judy Bradley in 1980. They went on to take on 'Mr Underhill's', which became a very well-known and prestigious, Michelin-starred establishment; at one time Ludlow boasted three restaurants with Michelin stars. Frodo, a.k.a. 'Mr Underhill', spent the last years of his life there, 'basking in guests' attention and posing for any passing camera'. A notable achievement was appearing on page 3 of the *Financial Times*! He lived to be 21, and was succeeded by two more British Blue kittens. He was also the cat in the Bradleys' book about their restaurant-owning experiences, *The Cat, the Cook and the Cook's Assistant.* Mr Underhill's closed in 2015 when the Bradleys retired.

### New York City, USA: February 1950

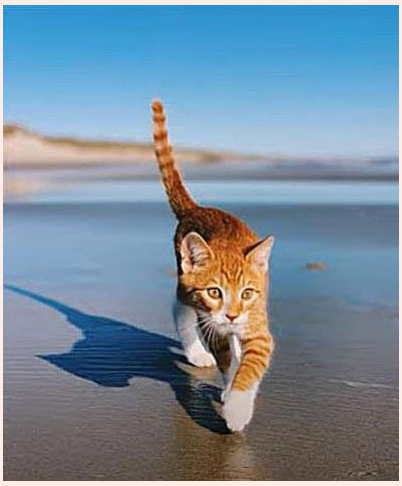
The *New York Herald Tribune* reported that the ashes of **Bing**, one of the better-known alley cats of the city, had been scattered in the rose garden behind his owner's home, where he used to like to lie in the sun. Bing had spent four years at Harvard with his human, and was known as 'the cat with the college education'. His passing also gained a mention in *Time* magazine.

### Oklahoma, USA: 2021

Madden Humphreys, 7 years old at the time, has odd-coloured eyes and that caused him to be harassed and bullied on his school bus. He became embarrassed by his condition, so his mother Christina and he talked about it and made a short film to put on a Facebook page. That gained a great deal of interest and Madden started to regain his confidence. Then Christina's parents happened to see, on another page, a cat in a shelter in Minnesota that had the same odd eyes as Madden. They adopted him straight away, and a road trip was organised to collect the cat and bring him the 1500 km (over 900 miles) from Minnesota to Oklahoma. Since then the boy and his cat, named **Moon**, became inseparable and Madden's confidence was fully restored. Fox News (March 2018)

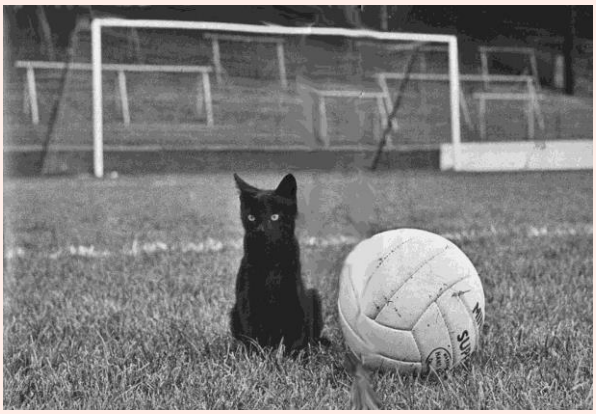
## Outer Banks, North Carolina, USA: 2021

**Marlin** is a cat who's been brought up with four canine siblings, and maybe regards himself as a dog! He loves to go on the beach and swim in the ocean with his companions, and enjoys going on the boat to go fishing  and eating fresh seafood! There's a summary of his activities at YouTube.



## London, England: 1968

This young black cat turned up at the ground of professional football club Charlton Athletic in south-east London. His arrival coincided with a winning streak for the club, so he was named **Lucky**. That year Charlton finished the season in their highest position in their league for more than 10 years.  Lucky also provided amusement when he relieved himself on the pitch during a game – which the club also won! He stayed around for many years, looked after by staff at the ground, and is still remembered fondly by fans.  Charlton Life (March 2018) *(copy link to browser)*



## Vladivostok, Russia:  December 2014

A stray cat, who probably lived around the airport, found her way into the display case of the seafood counter at the airport fish shop – and proceeded to munch her way through some 63,000 roubles-worth of seafood (about £740 at the time)! Amazingly, the incident was captured on video (see 'Big Lead' link below). The cat was praised by the leader of the St Petersburg Communist Party as a 'Robin Hood', taking from a shop where 'only the bourgeois and foreigners could buy'.

When the unnamed cat appeared again, as something of a national hero, she was adopted by the local hockey team, Admiral Vladivostok, as their mascot, and named **Matroskin**, after a cat in a 1978 animated film. She lived at their arena until she died in August 2016. A sculpture was unveiled in her memory and stands outside the arena – see Featuring / Statues & Memorials 6. *Daily Mail* (Dec. 2014) | Scottish Construction (Aug. 2016)

### Forres, Scotland: 2022

Four-year-old tabby **Fergus**, originally a rescue kitten from Cats Protection, had always been a bit of a wanderer, going off for a few days at a time, but in 2010 he disappeared altogether, and owner Fiona Mutter feared the worst. Imagine her surprise when she received a phone call 11 years later to say that Fergus was alive and well! He'd been hanging around a recycling centre in Aberdeen – 80 miles from Forres – for some time, until a Cats Protection volunteer had him scanned for a microchip, enabling him to be reunited with a delighted Fiona. He soon settled in back home with her other cat **Ozzy.** How he got to Aberdeen is a mystery, but it was most likely in a vehicle; and someone must have been caring for him, as he was in good shape when found.

The Scotsman (Jan. 2022)

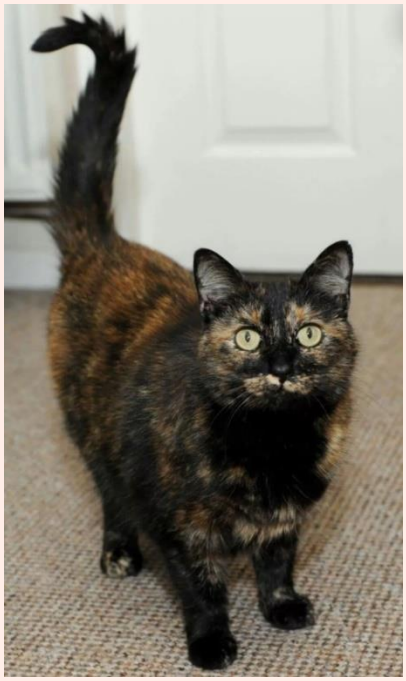
### Southend, Essex, UK: 2017

In 2017 Tony and Deb Pearce of Southend started feeding a stray black cat that they named **Billy**. At the time they were not doing well financially; Tony was unable to work owing to ill-health, they were in debt and were having to consider selling their house. But six months later, they won a million pounds on the lottery! They attributed their good fortune to Billy – who now gets the best treatment for his diabetes, and the best of everything! BBC News (Dec. 2022)

### Belfast, Northern Ireland: February 2022

There used to be a colony of cats on the Stormont Estate in Belfast, seat of the NI government, but numbers dwindled over the years until by 2017 just three remained: **Maggie** *(right)*, **Ginger** and **Furbie**. They were nicknamed the 'securi-cats', after some civil servants – who'd been feeding them for years – were banned from doing so as a perceived 'security risk', but that order was soon revoked after a press campaign. In 2019, though, Ginger and Furbie both died, just weeks apart, leaving Maggie *(right)* as the sole survivor. In February 2022 it was announced that she would be taking her retirement and going to live with a civil servant, where she was said to be happy and content. She was around 17 or 18 at the time.

Belfast Telegraph (Feb. 2022 – archived)



### Shrewsbury, Shropshire, UK: 2016

Claire Hopkinson, her husband and two sons were asleep in bed when an electrical fault in a neighbouring house started a fire. The Hopkinsons' cat **Tink** jumped up on Claire's bed to wake her, and she found the bedroom full of smoke. The family evacuated safely, but Tink was overcome by smoke and remained inside. She was rescued by a fireman, unconscious, but happily was revived with the aid of a tiny oxygen mask. 'Tink is a very valued family member,' said Claire. 'Without her we might not be here today.'

Tink's actions were recognised when she was voted Cat of the Year at Cats Protection's National Cat Awards at the Savoy Hotel in London in August 2016. BBC News (Aug. 2016)

### Qatar, UAE: December 2022

When the English football team was in Qatar for the World Cup games, they were befriended by a stray cat who spent time with them between games, and of course at the dinner table! He became a kind of unofficial mascot; they named him **Dave**, and said that if England won the cup they'd bring him back to the UK. England didn't win – but two of the players decided they'd bring him anyway. So Dave eventually travelled to England, and when his quarantine period was up he found a new, loving home – not with one of the players, but with a lady called Anna, who worked for the Football Association, and her family. He was reported to have settled in well

SBS News (Dec. 2022)

### Barnaul, Siberia, Russia: 2016

Alla Lebedeva and her husband Sergey raise Siberian farm cats in Barnaul. She says they live in the henhouse, where they have their own little bedrooms so they can sleep when they want to and they protect the chickens and rabbits from predators. How many cats do they have? She doesn't know.

Bored Panda (Dec. 2017) | YouTube
*(many clips, names of cats, some great stills – in Russian)*

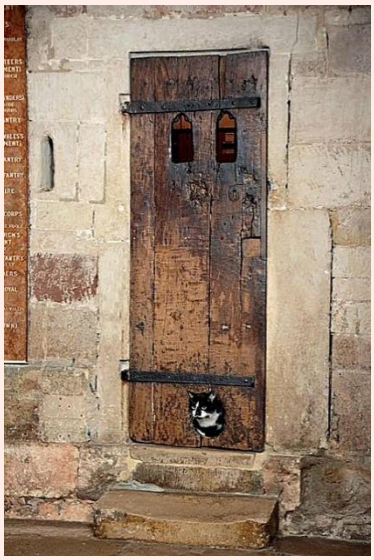
## Ohio, USA: November 2018

In late 2018 a pair of kittens were adopted by the computer-and-finance department of an Ohio-based trucking company (unidentified), with the aim of relieving boredom and improving the morale of employees. An employee posted a video on the internet, which went viral. The kittens were named **Debit** and **Credi**t, and got up to all kinds of mischief. Apparently there was an arrangement for employees to take it in turns to sleep on the premises at night, and to visit the kittens at the weekends. There was an Instagram account, but it was last used in mid-2020, so I don't know what happened then. Possibly when the cats grew up it became impractical to keep them at the office; whatever the case I hope they have good homes. News 24 (July 2019) | My kitten house (Dec. 2022)

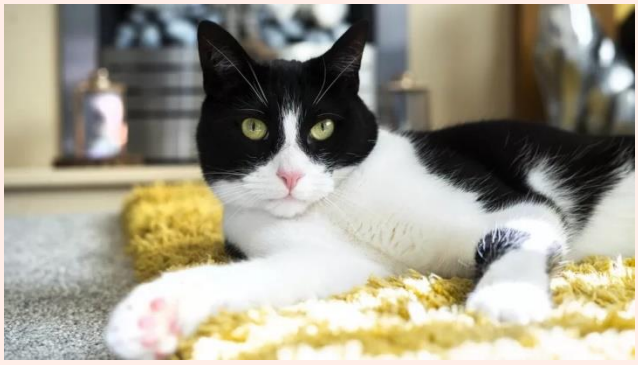
## Exeter, England: 1968

This is one of the the oldest existing cat entrances, or cat holes, preceding the modern cat flap. The door is at Exeter Cathedral in south-west England, and dates from the fourteenth century. Apparently, from 1305 until 1467 a penny a week was paid for a cat to keep rodents at bay (what was the money spent on?).

Facebook | Smithsonian Magazine (Sep. 2023)



## Chesterfield, Derbyshire, England: July 2023



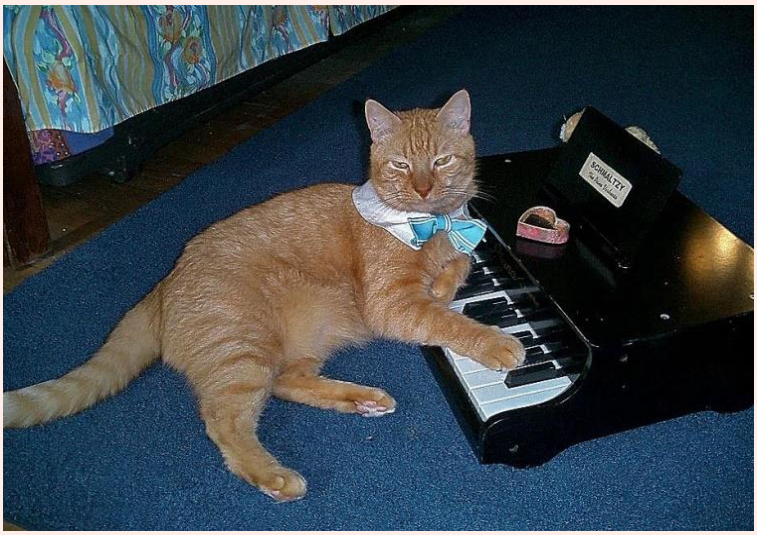
The overall winner of the annual National Cat Awards run by Cats Protection in the UK is named 'Cat of te Year', and in 2023 that honour went to **Zebby**, owned by Genevieve Moss, who is profoundly deaf. Zebby acts as her ears: if the phone rings, he'll alert her so she can put in her hearing aids and answer, and similarly if someone comes to the door he lets her know. If Zebby hears an unusual noise during the night, he taps her on the head to wake her up. He also picks up mail from the format and brings it to her – and sometimes even brings her slippers! He's never had any special training for any of these tasks. 'We have a very close bond,' says Genevieve, 'and I wouldn't want to cope without him. I'm so proud of Zebby for showing the world how intuitive and caring cats can be, and what a positive effect they can have on people's lives.' BBC News | North Wales Chronicle (both July 2023)

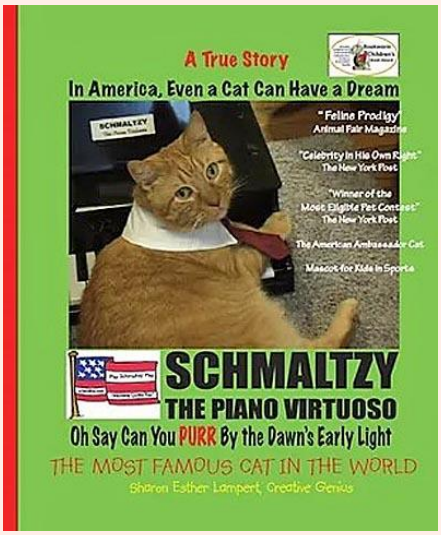
## Warrington, Cheshire, England: 2023

An unusual cat came into Cats Protection's Warrington adoption centre after her owners could no longer look after her. Named **Nanny McPhee** after a fictional character, the cat had a distinctively shaped nose, which turned out to be in effect two noses. The unique feature wasn't causing the four-year-old cat, described as gentle and loving, any problems, and it was hoped she'd soon find a new home. Dorset Echo (Oct. 2023)

## Sydney, Australia: December 2023

Ship's cat **Oli**, around 10 years old in 2023, joined retired naval officer Bob Williams on his yacht Sylph VI about five years previously, and now has many sea-miles under his paws. At first he was a bit seasick, but was soon quite happy on board, and if the weather gets a bit rough he just goes down below to find a good place to curl up and sleep. Oli and Bob were in the news in December 2023 as they were taking part in the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race; it's thought to be the first time a cat had participated, although that can't be verified as the race has been run for many years previously. Despite some rough weather along the way, they successfully completed the course. BBC News | ABC News | Canberra News (all Dec. 2023)






## New York, USA: date unknown

It's hard to find facts about **Schmaltzy** among all the hype, and although his story is clearly a twenty-first-century one, I can't pin down a date or whether he's still going. It seems he was adopted at just 8 weeks old from the North Shore Animal League by his human, Sharon Lampert. One day she came across a little toy piano and took it home. Schmaltzy sniffed it, then put a paw on the keyboard and began to 'play'. She encouraged him and (she says), 'An artist was born.' Later he was given a baby grand table-top piano, but whether his 'playing' approached that of Nora (see **Purr 'n' Fur/Famous**) I don't know. Lampert wrote a book *(above right),* which apparently aims to help children with their reading and vocabulary. Schmaltzy has a feline friend, also quite well-known, called **Falafei;** she seems to be connected in some way with soccer! Schmaltzy website | The Daily Cat (undated)

### United States: 2022

'Starlink' satellite dishes, costing $500 each, incorporate a self-heating device designed to prevent snow build-up from interrupting the signal during harsh American winters. However, in January 2022 it didn't take long for outdoor cats to discover another use for them! A man called Aaron Taylor posted a photo of five cats snuggling up on his Starlink dish, attracted by the warmth. He said the cats had shelters to go to, but if the sun was shining during the day they liked to go onto the dish, thus getting the sun's warmth from above and the heat from the dish below. At night they returned to their shelter. Aaron said their presence didn't interrupt the streaming of movies, but definitely slowed everything down.

Smithsonian Magazine | Daily News (both January 2022)

### Exeter, England: July 2020

It's difficult to establish who's actually the oldest living cat at any given time, as there may be more than one contender, and information on birth dates may not be accurate. Maybe for those reasons, I believe the Guinness record book no longer includes the category. However, it does seem that **Rubble**, a Maine Coon from Exeter, may have been the oldest cat living in 2020. Born in May 1988 and given to his human 'mum' for her 20th birthday when he was a kitten, she said he'd been a wonderful companion throughout his life. He died from old age shortly before his 32nd birthday.
Bored Panda (June 2018) | People (July 2020). | Wikipedia
For more info on oldest cats, see **Featuring Felines / Miscellany 10**.

### Sydney, Australia: February 2017

In December 2015 beautiful white cat **Champas**, about five years old, arrived at the Animal Welfare League Australia shelter in Kemps Creek, near Sydney, New South Wales. He was shy and nervous about meeting people, so staff brought him to the reception area as 'office cat', so that he gradually became more socialised and used to being with people. But as the weeks went by and no one came forward to adopt him, they hit on the idea of 'advertising' him with handwritten notices that were displayed on social media *(centre and right above).* And eventually, after 430-odd days at the shelter, a family came to give him his forever home. His new 'cat-dad' said, He came home with me today, and after biting my hand went straight to sleep!'
Buzzfeed (Feb. 2017) | We love cats and kittens (July 2023)

### Nantwich, Cheshire, England: 2001/2020

In 1999 Chris and Steve Ball adopted a kitten from the RSPCA's Stapeley Grange Animal Centre; she was a normal, fun-loving kitten who fitted well into family life. As an adult cat she became something of a 'homebody'; liked her creature comforts and never wandered far from home. But then, one evening when she was two years old, in June 2001, she just disappeared. She was last seen sitting in the garden – and then she was gone. The family scoured the neighbourhood, put up posters, knocked on doors and contacted vets and rescue centres – all to no avail.

Twenty years passed, with the family always wondering what had become of **Phoebe**. Then, in 2021, she was found, in a field that wasn't near any houses, by a kind lady who took her to the RSPCA. Fortunately her microchip details were still up to date, so she was able to be reunited with her family in an emotional reunion. Very sadly, though, she wasn't well and was found to have an inoperable brain tumour, causing her to have frequent seizures. so after just a few days she was put to sleep to end her suffering. At least she was loved for her last few days. Where she had been remained a mystery, but someone must have cared for her, as she couldn't have survived for so long on her own.

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