



A Cat in a Box and other Tails by Susie Bearder

Meet Tikka - my mother's grey Burmese who would get herself in any kind of bag or box for fun. She was capable of jumping from floor to the top of a standard door. She is now nearly 23; her brother had to be put to sleep last year. He was chocolate.

Interesting history of abandonment and homecoming – they belonged to a professional couple who went off to far away places for 6 months or so and my sister agreed to take responsibility for the duration but she was a busy person and these two babes often got du, uh, visiting rights with my mum. These people came back but were not eager to take their cats back and then she got pregnant and they didn't want the cats any more. So they were still shuffling back and forth between mum and sister....



Tikka

....until really the cats started voting with their feet in all sorts of ways and they stayed with mum for 20 years.

Tikka is now near the edge of giving up as she is deaf, no longer cleans herself properly and sometimes doesn't make the cat box.



Jessie I and brother Big Boy were part of a litter born in a horse field, reared there by her mum who was later known as Sweetpea. Elsewhere on this site I have discussed how they were finally caught and removed to the stables.

Jessie was boss and generally looked after her brother but she had a habit of getting herself into trouble like getting up into the rafters of the garage and going to sleep amongst the summer chair cushions. Then the door

would be locked and Big Boy on a number of occasions came and woke us up by crying until we followed him to where his sister had got into trouble. However she found amazing ways to feel safe and contained as you can see from the above photos. The joke is, she climbed into the jigsaw box of the most difficult cat puzzle in the world.

She got locked in the part time fire station over the road for a weekend. And in the end got run over one early Saturday morning returning from the fire station where I think she had a number of human beaux.



Fleur

Fleur - abandoned kit who found me in the Pyrenees. We loved her so much although I don't think my mother did as she would clamber up anything including the human leg. She was lovely – we waited until she



first came on heat as she was hard to put a precise age on her. She died under the anaesthetic while being sterilised at about eight months apparently of a heart attack. Mischievous and always looking for somewhere to feel safe and comfortable



With me at my desk – not sure about the bird

Barnie and Freddie were rescue kits from a Spanish organisation here in Murcia. Both had cat flu when we got them. The same vet was ready to put Freddie down because of his bad breathing. But we are made of sterner



stuff. We used to steam him - give him antibiotics - stuff down his throat - stuff up his bum. He got to hate me and gave me a wide berth for a long time. But he is still alive as you can see from the [Cecil story](#). His brother **Barnie**, however, who put himself in this plant pot and looks so sweet was dead within two years of feline leukemia. He would frequently find somewhere comfortable and dark to sleep. See 'Cats in Paintings' (to come at 17th Sept 2010).

Freddie and **Barnie** together - (I think their combined vet bills have been well over 1000 euros. When you take responsibility for an animal you just never know how it is going to be.)



Freddie and Barnie together

Jessie II , Ginnie and Milo - after losing **Barnie** and **Big Boy** we were all hurting too much to take on any more cats immediately but there comes a time when we realise we just missed having cats around. Poor Freddie was on his own. So we asked around but despite Spanish cats rarely being neutered we had to wait for their natural rhythm to produce our next cats.



Our neighbour's large tabbie produced a litter of three and we took them all. The neighbours would have just immediately drowned the unwanted kits if we had not asked for the litter.

This rather expensive bowl became their favourite toy until they could no longer fit in it. Although occasionally they will try....



Having four cats not including [Cecil](#) they all have favourite day sleeping places in summer. Jessie sleeps in the middle of the prickly pear. Ginnie tends to go for the donkey house.

The boys like their creature comforts. Milo tends to use the coolest bedroom in the house. Freddie has a chair on the patio that maximises breezes.

This little kit asleep on a box on an industrial estate here in Spain caught our eye but she gave us the evil eye and a growl.



Sophie, Squeaky and Sophie's next litter

Here is the ultimate of a "cat in a box story". My daughter bought an old farm up in the mountains of Carinthia. Before completion she said they needed to take responsibility for all the feral cats in the cellar and other places. This was a condition of sale.

So when they moved in in late autumn – no cats. It didn't take long however as it grew colder for a cat to arrive for food at the front door, (which on my first visit I decided was a 'Sophie'). She was nervous and didn't come in but moved in to the barn.

As winter moved on and snow fell Sophie turned up at the front door crying – and in a pretty bad physical state. Given some food but not prepared to be handled by humans she nevertheless disappears and later turns up with a kitten of a number of weeks old. They are given house room and a litter box but still they are frightened and hide in strange places, refusing to be touched. Kitten becomes Squeaky for obvious reasons.

Come spring it is clear that Sophie is pregnant again (other farms have loads of cats.)

These photos are courtesy of daughter.



Toward the end she is near or in the the house and finally produces her litter – Moan a lot, Moan a little, Sweetie, and Toffee.

However Sophie is being pestered by Squeaky whose nose is really put out of joint and the kits and mum had to be caged after Squeaky kept on sitting on top of the soft little cat house and squashing the kits. This time the kits were handled more or less twice a day with Sophie looking on and now they are completely human oriented. When there was less risk of Squeaky suffocating them a box arrangement was set up for the kits and mum. So what happens? Squeaky needs to be in the box with them. Within the box is mum, who will not be handled by humans, a junior who will play with humans and a litter of five who think humans are ok and like their IT toys in particular.



Didn't you know keyboards are a constant source of warmth? Cats find 'em and they are right between you and whatever it is you intended to do. The trouble is PCs are getting very much smaller.



Note: Cats sleep 16-18 hours of which 15 per cent is in deep sleep. Otherwise they cat nap and are vigilant for any sound or danger. No wonder they need to find safe or dark places to get their zzzzs in.
