

CHAPTER 3

In the event, we moved at the end of March 1994. When I say we, I mean Myrtle, myself, a friend Chris who drove the hire van for us, and, most important, all of our eight cats. Most important, for after all, this book is really about the cats, and we are perhaps only peripheral to their story! They had all been duly vaccinated against rabies and their EEC forms completed by our vet, and those papers all went into my briefcase with our tickets, freight manifest, passports, money and, of course, Sashkin's 9 pages of notes! I had taken the caravan over to Skt Klemens a month earlier, so now we loaded up the 3.5 tonne load hire van (with about 4.5 tonnes, judging by the look of the springs!) over two days, together with Myrtle's Micra, my Range Rover and the long trailer with all the 'wordly goods' that we could squeeze in. The Range Rover even had a well loaded roof rack. We had managed to get some extra cat carriers from a friend who had moved to New Zealand not long before, and together with the ones that we already had, and one doubling-up, we fitted all 7 onto the middle seat. By 12 noon we were already to go, except for a last minute customer who arrived then and couldn't seem to grasp that *we are going right now, and **won't** be back!* Colin, Olwen and Linda were there to wave goodbye and lock the gate for the last time. In fact I went back once more to Finchley in May to collect some things that we really couldn't fit into the vehicles, such as our stone bench, photocopier, motorcycle, armchairs and so on.

In 1994 we had the 8 cats, and they, in no particular order, (I get to it at last!) were Sashkin, Ptolomey, Gus, Skimbleshanks, Shelley, Twinkle, Grisabella and Rusty. Rusty was the youngest, and Ptolomey was the oldest. Unfortunately Shelley was very sick, and we hadn't expected her to survive until the move, but she did for just one day in our new home. The journey was difficult for us all, but luckily Shelley was just too ill to care, so it wasn't extra suffering for her. She shared her carrier with Sashkin, and so they looked after each other while on the road.

We got to Harwich in plenty of time for the ferry, as we had to book in to the freight office due to our big hire van. No problems there, and so on to the loading quay with everyone else. Chris handled the van and went direct to the quay, while Myrtle and I went from the usual car park onto the quay. We had had several conversations with the UK DFDS office, and had asked for us to be placed next to the lift going up to the Commodore deck. We had decided to treat ourselves for this last trip, and as we had booked for the cats to come into the cabin with us, wanted plenty of room.

All went well on the quay, with one of the loaders looking for us and pulling us out of line until we could drive on and end up directly against the lift door. Fine, and so off with the cat carriers, into the lift, and straight up to the Commodore deck. There the arrangements came to a grinding halt, as the purser had instructed the stewardess to cancel our cabin, and put us in a normal one, and the cats in the ship's prison!!! Of course we raised a riot!!! The purser came up to talk to us and said that no matter what we had been told, they could not allow cat fur into cabins in case the following passengers to use them had an allergy - what nonsense - have they never heard of cleaning? He was adamant, but said that he had not realised that we had 8 cats with us, despite us having paid for extra tickets for each of them! He asked me to come

with him to show me a place where he thought that they would have room; beds, litter trays, food, water and so on. I had to leave everyone standing where they were, while I checked it out. "It" turned out to be the space between the outer wall of the ship, and the inner, decorative, wall of the lounge. As it was not part of the passenger space, it just had bare, cold, damp, walls, and a plastic grid floor. No chairs or any other comforts, and this was to cross the North Sea in March!

He said that that was the only place that they could offer that had space for us all - the alternative was that the cats went through an outside deck to get to the single cabin which they used as a prison when necessary. No way was I going to agree to that, so the between walls space it was. It turned out that there was no way of locking the inner doors, as ship's staff would have to get in there from time to time, so we had to decide that at least one of us would have to stay with the cats all the time, or we could see them escaping into the ship! In the end, Chris took turns with us (he had his own cabin of course) and we took turns to use our one for naps. I went and grabbed some chairs from the lounge, and all the duvets and pillows from the cabin to spread on the floor for us and the cats. I then made the cabin stewardess supply some more for the cabin. And that was the way that DFDS shipped us all across to our new land! Of course we made a great fuss later, and they not only reduced the cabin fare to the basic, but refunded all the cost of the cat's tickets and 50% of ours, so the discomfort was at least, cheap!

Arriving at Esbjerg the reloading of the cars was in reverse order to getting on at Harwich, and the lift was still at the same place! We only had to wait for Chris to catch us up from the other side of the car deck, and we were ready with our veterinary papers for the Customs, who showed not the slightest interest, and just waved us through with everyone else! The journey to Skt Klemens was uneventful, although raining all the way, and we had to check that Myrtle's rather well-loaded Micra was keeping up. On the last stretch off the motorway (I was in the lead all the time) I went rather slowly, keeping an eye in the mirror to check that Chris was getting round the bends without *too* much of a sway! All went well, and before 5 pm, we were unlocking the front door and putting eight rather bewildered cats into our bedroom for safekeeping while we got the essentials out of the vehicles. (When I came over with the caravan in February, I had spent the time between ferries in getting some furniture that we had ordered from IKEA, putting together our new bed, and in putting in some lights.)

After a quick meal for us and the cats, we let them all have a look around before bedtime. Sashkin was perfectly happy to share the new bed, as was Rusty. We kept Shelley with us, but she was only just about hanging on. She had been sick for some weeks with a mystery illness that never seemed to respond to treatment, and was now seriously ill, not wanting to eat, and being unable to pass urine. The next morning Myrtle asked Susse where we could find a vet, and she told us of Højby Dyreklinik and where to find them, after telephoning to make an appointment for Shelley. Chris drove them in the Micra, as I was really the only one who could start the urgent job of unloading - Chris didn't know where to put anything, and Myrtle couldn't do the heavy work.

Eventually Chris found the vets - his first time of trying to read Danish road signs! - and they were met by Peder, who made them welcome and did a very good job of explaining in English that Shelley had her abdominal cavity full of fluid, either from a violent infection, or a burst bladder. In either event, he considered that there was really very little he could do that promised any effective treatment, so he would want to put her to sleep. Myrtle didn't want to make the decision by herself, so they came back with Shelley to see if I agreed. I drove back to Peder with Myrtle and Shelley, and there we decided that her new life had to end much too soon, but for the best. We brought her back with us, and she was the first of our English cats to be buried in our new garden. We already knew of a place where a rabbit had been buried, so Shelley was put alongside that, after all her friends had said goodbye to her. It was very sad for us all on only our first full day in our new home, but from later experience, it seems likely that Shelley had FIP, which was not a well-known disease at the time. As we had such understanding help at Højby, we have continued to take all our cats there. A little later a new vet became a partner in the practice, Kirsten, who not only has excellent English, but is also a fully trained homeopathic vet, so suits us perfectly.

[Link to Chapter 4](#)

Copyright 2003 A C Batchelor, Odense