

## CHAPTER 5

For a while in the late 80's we had two tabby cats. By 1989 they had both died, so on my way back from something in central London one day, I called in at CPL's Highgate rescue home to see if they had any kittens available. Rather hopeful for March, but I was in luck! A cat living in a factory had given birth on the 24th January 1989, and been brought in to the centre for neutering. She of course went back to her home, but the kittens themselves needed homes the day I came. Already two of them had new owners, and there were just a boy and a girl left. I said that I was sure that we would have the girl, so dashed home to collect Myrtle and straight back. There was another couple already there and looking at the boy, so we put our donation in the mug right away, and she was ours!

Sash was very intrigued by the little bundle, and helped her (not really needed!) to learn how to eat from a dish. Actually, only a saucer was required, and even that was a bit of a stretch for her. We quickly gave her her own collar and, as we had not long before seen 'Cats' in the original, and bought the book, we were very much into Cat Names, we chose Grizabella for her - the beautiful cat played by Elaine Page. Her full name was Grizabella Kotten-tot, as Myrtle rather liked one of Sashkin's ancestors names! By the time that we moved, she was a little over 5 years old, and no trouble at all to settle into her new home. By then she had become the undisputed (well, almost) top cat.

Now we have the twins, Gus and Skimbleshanks. They were named after the Theatre Cat and the Railway Cat, but Myrtle was not all that keen on Augustus, so Gus. They were born on the 31st March 1989, and were then fostered by a cat rescue center helper. Unfortunately, he was out all day at work, so the twins did not get much human contact. We first saw them in July at a hobby cat show where we were providing the whole of the light and sound fit-up in Victoria Park for the annual Finchley Carnival. They were in a cage with no hiding place and looked very forlorn; so much so that nobody showed any interest in giving them a home. We, of course, had to say that if by the end of the Carnival they were still unhomed, we would have them. At the end, we were informed that they were ours! We could not take them then as we had the get-out to attend to. A few days later we arranged to collect them from their foster home, and transported two very timid cats back home with us where they hid in the basket, with Gus, the biggest at the start, desperately trying to stay behind his brother! In the end, they made friends with Bella, the recent newcomer, and started to join in with all the games. By the time we moved, they were two lovely big cats, and then started to sleep with us at night.

Finally, we brought Rusty. Rusty was a red cat (what else!) and came from a pet shop to Myrtle as a birthday present from Shirley - a friend who worked there. Rusty was born on the 17th May 1992, so was nearly two years old when we moved. When he came to Myrtle he was in a very sorry state, with ear mites and fleas!! Typical, I am afraid, for many of the pet shops. He quickly recovered and settled in as a very happy cat who loved to cuddle with Myrtle, and play with all his new friends. He of course slept on the bed at night!

I earlier described how Shelley did not survive her very serious illness. Luckily, none of the other cats had any problems for quite a while, so after they were fully acclimatised to the house and garden, we could all enjoy our first summer. Sashkin was at first our only problem. He had been very sick the previous year with toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that frequently kills cats when they get it. Sash was a survivor, in many ways, and the only after-effect for him once the infection was under control, was that he became deaf. Apparently one of the typical cysts that form must have been in his brain, and affected the hearing centre. He coped very well, and quickly learned to lip read! At least, that is what I called it. He would look at my face to see what I was telling him, and the effect was as if he could hear perfectly well! I thus had a potential worry that if he got too far from home, I would not know where he had got to, and he would not hear me calling him. Luckily, the others seemed to understand his problem, and mostly he would be shepherded around. On the odd occasion when he could not readily be seen, I would usually find him within a few minutes. One day our neighbour brought him back looking very worried, asking if this was one of our cats. He said that he was making a funny noise (just Siamese chat) and did not take any notice of him at first! We explained how he was, and thereafter if he did not appear, I would have a look in their garden to start with!

With the coming of summer, we were gradually getting used to finding our way around to all the places that as tourists we did not know very well. We also struggled to understand such things as the Danish television programmes, and all the free newspapers and brochures that came through the door every week. One item of news that we did understand was that there was a cat rescue centre not far from us who were having an open day, and so we wrote to them asking if we could visit them, and maybe even help out. (We never got an answer; we eventually learned that Gerd had been deputed to write back as she had the best English, but forgot to do it!) We explained that by the time that we had understood the report, the open day was over!

Later in the year we thought more about the centre (Kattens Værn) and decided to find them and see if we could have a look around. We were made welcome, and then found out about the forgotten letter! When we suggested that we had plenty of spare time, and perhaps they would like a little help, the answer was an enthusiastic "Ja"! We made arrangements to spend a few hours one day a week to help with all the cleaning and other work so necessary, and thus made some new friends, both human, and feline. Of course, with so many cats around us each time we went, it was inevitable that we soon got a new, Danish, cat for our new Danish home, and that will start the next chapter.

**[Link to Chapter 6](#)**

Copyright 2003 A C Batchelor, Odense