



We're in the mood... for FIGHTING CANCER

Amelia Bailey, 45, tells *Bella* how she and her sister are fighting to beat the disease that's caused them such heartache...

Sitting in the waiting room with my husband Andrew, I fidgeted nervously. 'They'll call you soon,' Andrew tried to reassure me.

It was a wintry February day in 2011 and I was in hospital to collect the results of a biopsy I'd had two weeks before.

I'd found a lump in my left breast back in November 2010. I'd suffered cysts for years so assumed it would be that. I'd just have it drained and be on my merry way.

But, this time, a mammogram picked up something sinister.

Now, sitting in the waiting room, I felt sick with fear.

An agonising three and a half hours

later, the consultant called Andrew and me in. 'It's malignant,' he said. 'Cancer.' I could barely hear a word he was saying: 'Treatment... chemotherapy... radiotherapy.'

Too shocked to absorb any information, we were sent home with an appointment for a week's time.

On our way back to our home in Lincolnshire,

practical matters swam around in my head: 'What if I don't make it? Would Andrew be able to look after our 21-month-old daughter

'We'll get through this together'

Matilda on his own? How would we pay the mortgage?' My older sister Angela had been looking after Matilda that day.

When I arrived to collect her, Angela rushed out the door, eager to hear the news.

'Don't show any emotion,' I said. 'I don't want Matilda to see you cry. It's cancer.'

My daughter was only a toddler but I didn't want her to feel our sadness.

'Okay,' Angela replied. 'We're going to get through this together.'

Andrew, my elderly mum and other older sisters, Amanda and Allison, were supportive too.

At the end of February, I had the lump removed and, in March, began chemotherapy.

The side effects knocked me for six. I was sick, had ulcers and ached all over.

Family and friends kept my spirits up while I was bedridden, and Angela's husband Nigel, who was a father figure to me as I'd lost my dad when I was 30,

sent me notes of support.

'Stay strong,' he wrote.

A couple of weeks into my treatment, I started to lose my hair. I knew it was time to shave it off, so one day in April, Andrew fetched a pair of scissors, clippers and a bin.

We got Matilda involved in the process too, so she wouldn't be shocked to see a bald Mummy.

'Why are you cutting your hair?' Matilda asked me.

'I want a new hair style for the summer,' I replied.

She seemed happy with that and as Andrew chopped off what was left of my blonde bob, he passed the tufts to Matilda to throw away.

After six months of chemo, I had a month of daily radiotherapy, which ended in September 2011.

The moment I walked out of the hospital doors after my last round, the clouds parted and a ray of sunshine shone down on me.

'This is the first day of the rest of my life,' I thought.

It had been a struggle but doctors were confident they'd got rid of the cancer. I'd have to go back for regular check-ups. But I could look forward again.

Then just over a year later, I got a call from my oldest sister, Allison. 'Look,' she said bluntly. 'I've got a



Amelia (left) and Angela

lump. It's breast cancer. I'm going to need the same treatment as you.'

I couldn't believe this was happening to her too.

'I'll fight it with everything I've got,' she said, typically stoic.

'I know,' I told her. 'I know.'

She was midway through chemotherapy when our family was hit with more terrible news.

Nigel, Angela's husband, had woken with excruciating back pain one morning in spring 2013.

He did heavy lifting for work so they thought he'd pulled a muscle, but after weeks of increasing

pain, he went to hospital for scans.

When the results came back, we were floored. It was cancer – an aggressive, unknown primary cancer, and there was nothing they could do.

Nigel spent a week in hospital before being moved to a hospice.

Amanda, Allison and I visited him every day, as did Angela and his grown-up son.

It was a surreal time, because

The cause of our hurt had been cancer – and I wanted to fight it. Fundraising seemed the way.

I came up with an idea to make a charity song to raise money for Cancer Research UK. Though I was a nurse now, I'd worked in band management in my youth, so I knew a bit about the industry.

I chose The Nolans' *I'm In The Mood For Dancing*. It was my favourite tune and uplifting. But it had to be about cancer. So, one

we knew he was dying, and it was happening so fast.

On 24 May 2013, Nigel passed away – just two weeks after he'd been diagnosed and two weeks before his 50th birthday.

I thought back to when Amanda's husband Neil had also been diagnosed with bone cancer. Fortunately, surgery had been successful. But it dawned on me that in one way or another, all four of us sisters had been affected by cancer.

After we lost Nigel, we didn't know how to pull ourselves out of despair. Before I knew it, a year had passed and our spirits hadn't lifted.

'I want to turn this negativity into something positive,' I said to Andrew one evening.

night in 2014, I sat at my kitchen table and rewrote the lyrics.

'We're in the mood for racing, fundraising,' I penned. 'Ooh, just giving it all to fight.'

It was perfect. And when I told Andrew and my sisters they thought it was a great idea.

Next I needed my singers. I contacted all the women I knew who'd been affected by cancer – my mum, sisters and women I'd met on the chemo ward.

Soon there were 20 of us, including me, in the choir, aged from nine to 64. And only one of us, Rochelle, was a professional singer. We named ourselves The Cancer Fighters.

I needed permission to use the song. So I contacted The Nolans' agent who directed me to Sony Music, as they owned the rights. As the single was for charity, they let us use it free of charge.

We had pink T-shirts made, funded by Tesco and, in December, we were given a free session at a professional recording studio in Slough, Berkshire. Two of the writers of the original song, Mike Myers and Robert Puzey, came down, too. It was the best day ever.

Since then, we've had backing from celebrities such as Sharon Osbourne, Lorraine Kelly and Westlife's Kian Egan, who've all been pictured wearing or holding our T-shirts. And our single's now available to download.

At just 99p, we hope lots of people buy it to raise money for such a good cause. We might even get into the charts!

Our T-shirts are also for sale in Tesco for £10. If we sell all those ordered, we could raise £50,000!

My family know about the reality of cancer and the amazing work Cancer Research does. Without them, Neil, Allison and I may not have made it. And Nigel would be proud of us – and laughing at us trying to sing, too!

Now, I have yearly scans to check my cancer hasn't returned, as does Allison, and so far so good.

After everything we've been through as a family, we had to do something fantastic to fight against this disease.

With our brilliant single, we know we've done that. ■

Some names have been changed. Words: Harriet Thurley



The four sisters (from left) Amelia, Angela, Amanda and Allison with their mum Ann



Angela and Nigel



From left: supporters Kian Egan, Lorraine Kelly and Sharon Osbourne



Phillip Schofield and Amanda Holden on *This Morning*