Courageous: Birthday girl Helen pushes on for UK Charity

By Mel Cooper Melton Times April 29th 2004

A 19-YEAR-OLD'S battle with cancer inspired her to complete a 26 mile bike ride to raise cash for research into the illness. Helen Padgett's father, Terry, died of bowel cancer when she was seven years old and doctors found the Melton care assistant had inherited a gene which made her prone to the disease. She has endured several operations to dramatically reduce the risk and is determined to make the most of life.

Helen who celebrates her birthday today, said "You have to be cheerful, if not you would cry. A lot of people have said I have changed - I used to be quiet and shy. Now I am more outspoken and a lot more confident. I was very conscious of everything before and didn't think I had as many friends as I did but they all came to support me. "I just though there is no point being quiet and shy when there is so much out there to do".

At the age of 15, when Helen was old enough to have a test, doctors found polyps in her intestine - if the growths are left unchecked they can develop into cancer. Three times a year Leicester Royal Infirmary doctors removed them and, after finding the polyps had become active, they removed her lower intestine. The operation saved Helen's life. "I was more upset that my dad wasn't there to help me along with the feelings and everything. My emotions have been all over the place. When I came out I was only six stones and for the first two weeks I couldn't eat, couldn't drink and was just in bed."

A colostomy bag was attached and a pouch created inside her stomach. In January when she had healed inside, the bag was removed. Now Helen is checked annually by doctors in case the polyps move to her throat.

Helen said her employer; Copper Beeches Nursing Home in Melton has been very supportive in giving her time off. She has also been helped by friends, family and her partner Adam Slater.

Adam also from Melton, completed the bike ride with Helen around Rutland Water and the pair raised £220 for Cancer Research