



► Elaine Cook with her 'family' in India

Gannin' up Ganges gives new lease of life to author Elaine

Despite a bombshell cancer diagnosis, Elaine Cook went ahead with a dream trip to India and she has now turned her experiences into a new book which she hopes will provide inspiration to others. She spoke to MIKE KELLY about it.

JUST five days before Elaine Cook was due to set off on a long-planned dream trip to India, she received the nightmare news that she had cancer of the kidney.

Despite the potentially life-threatening diagnosis, she went ahead with the journey anyway.

Now, six years on, she has overcome the potentially killer disease and written a book inspired by her experiences on the trip.

Called *A Geordie Up The Ganges*, it is out now and published under her pen name, Nell Cook.

While it is fiction, Elaine obviously didn't have to deviate much from real life for her plot, the lead character being a Geordie lass called Jennifer Barnes who receives a bombshell cancer diagnosis.

Like Elaine, she refuses to give in to fear and embarks on an adventure trip to India with seven strangers.

"Her goal is to find the real Jen before it's too late," said Elaine. "She hides her illness and during the journey finds she's not the only one with secrets.

"Jen experiences the magic of the Kumbh Mela which is the biggest festival on earth, she rides the river's rapids at Rishikesh and experiences the wilder side of Varanasi.

"The story follows the route of the Ganges, and the river's twists and turns are reflected in the ensuing events and relationships within the group. The theme is self-discovery, and the premise is that your past need not dictate your future."

The story behind the story began a long time before Elaine's diagno-

sis, she says, when she discovered yoga.

"It changed my life and my interest in yogic philosophy deepened when I studied the British Wheel of Yoga foundation course.

"That's when the compulsion to visit India was born. I needed to immerse myself in the country which had founded yoga over 5,000 years before."

After two years of planning the trip, which was due to start on her 55th birthday, came the cancer