

Georgia's fighting fit on her sixth birthday

Back at school after her bone marrow transplant

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By Maureen Coleman

Brave little Georgia Cocking has celebrated her sixth birthday - almost a year after undergoing a bone marrow transplant.

The Lisburn girl, who suffered from a rare form of leukaemia, underwent the procedure last April after a donor match was found for her by the Anthony Nolan Trust.

According to mum, Debbie, Georgia is back at school now and fighting fit.

And she had an early birthday present when members of the Emmerdale cast popped into the Culloden Hotel to launch a one-day charity event for the Trust in Northern Ireland - and to give Georgia a big hug.

Debbie and husband Gary were left reeling when Georgia was diagnosed with leukaemia on October 9 2006.

Debbie said: "We noticed that she had lost weight and seemed a lot calmer than usual, not very energetic and tired all the time.

"Her wee stomach was very protruded so we brought her to the doctors on Monday morning and by Monday afternoon we were told that her spleen was enlarged and that she had leukaemia.

"We were all absolutely devastated and I didn't think I'd be able to cope. Gary was a lot stronger than me but we just had to keep going. Gary kept saying that we were going to beat it, that Georgia was going to beat it."

Georgia spent about 10 days in hospital, where doctors told her parents that her only hope of survival was a bone marrow transplant.

Debbie, Gary and Georgia's older brother Liam were all ruled out as perfect matches.

So Debbie began the painstaking task of trying to find out as much as she could about bone marrow transplants.

"I went onto the internet and discovered the Anthony Nolan Trust's website," she said.

" I then contacted the donor recruitment manager Angela MacVicar and asked for her help."

In January, the Cockings were told that a donor was found and three months later, she was flown to Bristol Children's Hospital, where the transplant took place.

Debbie said: "Georgia is fantastic now; a lot more active and full of fun. She's got a great wee personality and we're delighted to see her so well."

Debbie said her family would all be at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra on June 7 for the Emmerdale Extravaganza.

"Gary is from Yorkshire and both Georgia and Liam were born there before we moved here, so we're all big Emmerdale fans.

"The whole family will be there on the day and we're really looking forward to it. I'm going to do the abseil, as is Georgia's granddad.

"And Gary's going to do the Go Loopy Aeroplane Challenge, even though he's afraid of flying.

" But it's all in the name of a very good cause and if it wasn't for the Anthony Nolan Trust, we wouldn't have Georgia here with us today."