

# I'm so lucky to be here I don't want to be angry that the doctor

**S**TEPHEN SUTTON doesn't believe in miracles. Or at least, he didn't. Now he's not so sure. What he does know for certain is the very fact he's here today is, well, as he says, 'pretty weird'. Just three weeks ago, it seemed he was hours from death.

'To be so close to actually dying is scary, but at



by Rebecca Hardy

the same time incredibly reinvigorating,' the 19-year-old told the Mail.

'I am so lucky and so fortunate to be here. My cancer has taught me a lot about life. All the

cliches — not taking life for granted, blah, blah, blah. But being so close to death just reinforced all those feelings about making the most of what we've got.'

Stephen, of course, is the inspirational young man who was diagnosed with bowel cancer aged just 15.

Two years ago, he discovered his illness had spread and was terminal. And so he wrote a bucket list of 46 things he wanted to do before he died, and put it on Facebook.

The list included hugging an elephant, getting a tattoo and learning to juggle. Top of the list, however, was raising £10,000 for the charity Teenage Cancer Trust. First and foremost, you see, Stephen wanted to do good.

Three weeks ago, his blog went viral when, with a collapsed lung and believing he was 'a goner', the teenager posted a picture of himself in a hospital bed giving his trademark thumbs-up sign. His message touched hearts across the world.

'It's a final thumbs-up from me,' he wrote. 'I've done well to blag things as well as I have up till now, but unfortunately I think this is just one hurdle too far.'

'It's a shame the end has come so suddenly. There's so many people I haven't got round to properly thank or say goodbye to. Apologies for that ...'

'Whatever happens next I want you all to know I am currently in a good place mentally and at ease with the situation. That's it from me. But life has been good. Very good.'

Those were, quite simply, intended to be his last words.

'Naturally, it was emotional,' he says. 'But as soon as I wrote my farewell, all this love and support started coming in. It was humbling.'

'There were messages from all corners of the Earth. Long messages. Short messages.'

Stephen's story had caught the public's imagination. Money began to flood in for his nominated charity.

## 'Mum and I don't talk about fears. We get on with it'

To date, he has raised more than £3.2 million. And somehow, he is still defying all expectations.

So many adjectives have been ascribed to Stephen. Inspirational. Amazing. Extraordinary. None of them do him justice.

In conversation, it's not just his courage that takes your breath away. His sheer life-force is astonishing. Take, for example, when he tells me that he's 'relatively healthy'.

The reality is he has tumours in his calf, knee, groin, pelvis, chest wall and airway. It's the latter one that's a particular worry.

Yesterday, just a few hours after we spoke, he was readmitted to hospital, where his breathing is being monitored.

On Friday he will see his consultant, where they will discuss the next stage in his treatment.

'I'm happy to be here and any time I do have is a bonus,' he says, in the sort of matter-of-fact way many of us might talk about a prolonged sunny spell.

'I'm just going to think of as many projects as I can to help others and see what good I can do — and enjoy

**BOY WHO'S  
INSPIRED  
BRITAIN**

*The Mail's front page, April 26*

myself at the same time.' Stephen's buoyancy is, to borrow his favourite adjective, 'awesome', particularly given the rasping cough that punctuates our interview and the fact he is on morphine to manage his pain.

As he says, 'there are more and more things slowly going wrong with my body.'

Not once does he ask: 'Why me?' 'If you ask those questions you don't get anywhere,' he says. 'The

## 'I don't measure life in time but by what you can do'

main way I deal with this is pragmatism. If you start asking different questions, you get so much more done.'

But his mature equanimity wobbles ever so slightly when he discusses how doctors disastrously missed his cancer, misdiagnosing it as mere constipation for six months. Had this not occurred, he says, his prognosis might be very different.

'On the whole, the NHS has been brilliant, but there will always be a kind of ...' He searches for the right word. 'Well, probably just anger.'

Is he angry now? 'Yes,' he says, quietly but with a haunting emphasis. 'There always will be anger. If it had been caught earlier it could have led to a better prognosis. It could have changed the situation.'

'But even saying that, I'm not one to dwell on the past. It is what it is.'

The younger of two brothers, Stephen — who lives with his mother Jane and stepfather Tony, both accountants, in Burntwood, Staffordshire — was brought up in a pragmatic household where the stuff of life was dealt with 'practically and efficiently'.

'Mum and I don't really talk about our fears. I don't know why,' he says. 'It's not that we're scared to. We probably think a lot of the same things, but we've learned to just get on with it.'

'We've been dealing with incurable cancer since November 2012, so we know there is an end at some point.'

Stephen has always been a focused, driven young man. He played football for Walsall youth team and competed in cross-country running and athletics at county level before he began to suffer the most dreadful stomach cramps, weight loss, sickness and loss of appetite in 2011.

'It got to the point where what should have been a minute-long walk would take ten minutes because of the pain,' he says.

But doctors sent him home with laxatives, despite a family history on his father Andrew's side (with whom he remains close) of Lynch Syndrome, a genetic condition that increases the risk of bowel cancer and a range of other tumours.

'I lost two stone in weight and was



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# e. But there'll always doctors missed my cancer

**As he's rushed back to hospital, dying cancer boy who's raised £3.2m talks with dauntless courage and astonishing optimism — but also reveals the blunders that haunt him**



very, very ill,' he says. 'We gave the doctors all the information they needed, told them about the family history and even showed them a booklet about Lynch Syndrome.'

'It explained the common symptoms of bowel cancer — I had every single one. But I just naively listened to them, hoping it was going to get better.'

He was finally given an emergency CT scan when he had deteriorated so much that he couldn't keep down fluids or food and was unable to sleep because of the pain.

The scan revealed a blockage in his bowel. The following day, he underwent surgery. The growth was cancerous.

'We dealt with it very calmly at the time,' he says. 'Obviously it was a huge shock, but also a relief. I finally had an answer.'

Stephen started six months of chemotherapy and he says he did have moments of self-pity.

'There always is that with cancer, particularly towards the middle of the chemotherapy when I felt most sick. I was trying to study for my

GCSEs. The chemo was making the skin peel off my hands, so I couldn't hold a pen. You do start to think: "This seems a bit unfair."

Teenage Cancer Trust changed everything for him. In February 2011, he attended a conference for young people with cancer, organised by the charity, called Find A Sense Of Tumour.

'That was a life-changing experience for me,' says Stephen. 'Spending time with other young cancer patients made me realise the illness is unfair, but there's nothing we can do about it.'

'You can't control the uncontrollable, but what you can do is still *live*.' Clearly he is a young man who appears entirely accepting of the cruel hand fate has dealt him.

Despite the effects of his illness and chemotherapy, Stephen, who has always wanted to be a doctor, achieved five A\*s, four As and two distinctions in his GCSEs.

Doctors thought he was in remission and he began studying for his A-levels. Then, in November 2011, he discovered a lump behind

his knee while sitting in the sixth form common room. Cancer was again diagnosed.

'I thought: "Here we go again."' The lump was removed and, in February 2012, he began 30 sessions of radiotherapy.

Unable to continue with his beloved sport, he channelled his energies into his studies.

Despite his deteriorating health, he achieved an A\* in mathematics, which he sat a year early, and grade As in AS level physics, chemistry and biology. He also taught himself psychology — and got an A in that subject, too.

After the radiotherapy, Stephen had three months of chemotherapy. Still the tumour continued to grow. Doctors discussed an above-the-knee amputation, which must have been a terrible decision for a sporty teenager to have to make.

'It was the best option at the time,' says Stephen. 'In the grand scheme of things, if it did have the desired effect, then I'd lose a leg any day if it helped me live longer.'

expect to live? 'No, the progression of my disease is unique. They may have been able to give some indication, but I decided I didn't really want to know.'

'That's when I stopped measuring life in terms of time and started measuring it in terms of what I could actually do.'

'The world changed once I walked away from that consultation. You start looking back on your life and assessing everything.'

'You start thinking about the stuff you regret. I kind of regretted all the things I didn't do, whether it was not going on a night out or not having more fun.'

'That consultation made me think about my future. I wanted to become a doctor to help others. Well, pragmatically, a six-year medical course followed by two years of training wasn't going to work. With an incurable disease and a limit on how long I had left, I had to think about what I wanted to do. So, on January 13, 2013, I

**'I can look back and think: Yes, I did good'**

spontaneously made a bucket list and posted it on Facebook.

'The response was so awesome I decided to leave school and concentrate on fundraising. It's gone crazy since then.'

And it certainly has — especially after that thumbs-up picture from his hospital bed three weeks ago, which prompted a huge outpouring of affection.

Stephen tells me that when he finished typing that farewell, he handed his phone to his mother. 'I said to Mum: "Is this a fair representation of things? Can you just double-check?"'

'I was on quite a lot of morphine at the time and it was kind of a way for both of us to come to terms with the situation without having to properly talk about it.'

'I'd had a collapsed lung the day before. The doctors thought I was a goner.'

'The best way to describe how I felt is that I was ready if it was my time. There was a peacefulness.'

'It's hard to describe without using religious overtones, but I was totally at ease with the situation. I could look back and think: "I did good." My mum read the post and said: "Yes, that's fine."

Stephen pushed 'send'. 'Once all the messages started, I just hung in there,' he says. 'The doctors and nurses who came in during that week couldn't believe it really.'

'I've thought about it quite a bit. Whether my health started to improve because of all these positive messages we will never know, but it's pretty weird.'

'I felt a kind of elation because I was surrounded by so much love. I couldn't move an inch without the oxygen machine because I was struggling to breathe.'

'Normally, in those kind of times, there would have perhaps been some darker moments, but there were so many messages coming in



**Life-force: A selfie of Stephen and his trademark thumbs-up, taken on Saturday to thank Daily Mail readers for their support. Inset: With his mother Jane**

But before we had a chance to do that, a scan came back that showed the cancer had spread to the pelvis and lymph nodes.'

Stephen was told the disease was incurable. 'That was kind of hard,' he says. Then he shrugs: 'But it is what it is.'

Was he told how long he could

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# Farage: Older people are uncomfortable about homosexuality

By **Jason Groves**  
Deputy Political Editor

OLDER people are uncomfortable about homosexuality, Nigel Farage claimed yesterday.

The UK Independence Party leader said most people aged over 70 are not comfortable about gay people or equal rights.

He said many are disconcerted by the introduction of gay marriage.

And he risked an electoral backlash by defending Ukip's Newark by-election candidate Roger Helmer,

**NIGEL** Farage claims he has been forced to hire bodyguards due to the threat of violence from anti-fascist organisations.

The Ukip leader said yesterday that members of the groups Unite Against Fascism and Hope Not Hate have been violently protesting at his public meetings.

He said: 'I'm perfectly happy for them to come to my meetings and have an argument with me, but it's not so much fun when they are banging me over the head with banners.' Both groups denied Mr Farage's accusations.

who has described homosexuality as abnormal and undesirable. Mr Farage said: 'If we asked the 70s and over in this country how they felt about it [homosexuality], most of them still feel uncomfortable.'

His intervention came as a poll suggested controversy about Ukip's candidates may be denting the party's popularity in the run-up to next week's European Parliament elections.

An exclusive Opinion poll for the Daily Mail reveals that Ukip and Labour are now almost neck and neck in the race to top the poll on May 22.

The survey of voting intentions for the European elections puts Ukip on 28 per cent, Labour on 27, the Conservatives on 23 and the Liberal Democrats on just 8 per cent. Ukip's one-point lead is its lowest this month.

Mr Helmer, 70, is standing for Ukip in next month's poll in

Newark, Nottinghamshire, which was forced by the resignation of shamed Tory MP Patrick Mercer.

The Ukip candidate is a serving MEP and is also standing for the European Parliament again next week. But his outspoken views on homosexuality have sparked controversy. He has previously said homosexuality is 'not a lifestyle worthy of valid equal respect', but now claims that his views have changed.

Mr Farage told the BBC's Sunday Politics show yesterday that Mr Helmer 'grew up with a strong Christian Bible background - he grew up in an age when homosexuality was actually imprisonable'. He said Mr Helmer was a

good candidate who had made his most outspoken comments on homosexuality while he was a Conservative MEP.

He added: 'When Roger grew up and, indeed, when he was an adult, homosexuality was illegal in this country, and he held that view for some period of time.'

'And actually, if we asked the 70s and over in this country how they felt about it, most of them still feel uncomfortable.'

'He has said the world has moved on, he now accepts there's been a big social change in Britain. There are a lot of people in this country who are disconcerted by the change in the traditional meaning of marriage, and

I think in a tolerant society we understand that some people have different views.'

Ukip has faced a deluge of bad publicity about comments made by some of its candidates and leading supporters.

Demetri Marchessini, Ukip's sixth biggest donor, claimed last month that gay people are incapable of love and said it was impossible for a man to rape his wife. Harry Perry, a Ukip council candidate in Stockport, was suspended from the party earlier this month for branding David Cameron a 'gay-loving nutcase'.

The party has also been forced to discipline a number of candidates for racist remarks.



Forced on the defensive: Nigel Farage unveiling a Ukip campaign poster yesterday

## Chaos as rebels hold secession vote in Ukraine

PRO-RUSSIAN insurgents in Ukraine have pushed ahead with a vote to declare independence in two regions - a decision described in the capital Kiev as 'a step into the abyss'.

Yesterday the ballots were taking place amid chaotic scenes at polling stations, many of which had no voting booths and no access to an electoral register.

A head teacher reported being threatened with death if she refused to allow rebels to use her school as a polling station. And Ukrainian national guardsmen left at least two people dead after opening fire on a crowd outside the town hall in the eastern town of Krasnoarmiysk.

The hastily arranged referendums are intended to show approval for the declaration of 'sovereign people's republics' in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where insurgents have seized government buildings and clashed with Ukrainian troops. They follow the March vote in Crimea which approved seceding from Ukraine and joining Russia.

A US spokesman Jen Psaki called the votes 'an attempt to create further division and disorder', adding: 'The US will not recognise the results of these illegal referenda.'

And Ukrainian President Oleksandr Turchynov said they could cause 'a complete destruction of the economy and general life for the majority of the population'.

## Put youngsters on TV, says Cilla

AS a showbusiness veteran of 70, you might expect Cilla Black to stand up for older presenters.

But the former Blind Date host prefers young and pretty faces on screen - and says ageing stars should retire unless they are especially talented.

She told the Observer magazine: 'It's all about the talent. [David] Dimbleby has talent.' Miss Black, pictured, who presented the dating show from 1985 to 2003, has not officially retired but rarely makes TV appearances.

She had been due to star in a BBC sitcom with chat show host Paul O'Grady but the project was axed amid concerns she would not cope with the long filming hours.

Asked if she would like to replace former Strictly Come Dancing host Bruce Forsyth, 86, Miss Black said: 'Ha, I couldn't do that, I couldn't dance down those stairs.'

'Anyway I'd get bored, I'd be saying, "Enough about you. It's all about me".'

In 2010, Miss Black revealed she did not want to live beyond the age of 75, saying: 'I don't want to go on for ever.'



## Bugs help babies to beat asthma

EXPOSING newborns to bacteria may help prevent asthma as they grow up, according to a study.

The findings bolster the theory that the modern obsession with hygiene is behind a boom in allergies and health problems. More than five million Britons are under treatment for asthma and the number of deaths it causes is rising. Around 1,250 Britons died from the disease last year.

The latest work, published in the journal Nature Medicine, may lead to bacterial treatments in which germs are intentionally fed to infants.

Asthma attacks are caused by an over-strong inflammatory immune response to allergy triggers such as house dust mites, pets or air pollutants.

Researchers at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland found that newborn mice whose lungs were colonised by microbes developed immune cells that can suppress asthma. Keeping mice in sterile conditions rendered them sensitive to bugs and resulted in asthma as adults.

The researchers said the key is translating these findings to human infants.

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that it just kept me going.' Stephen's condition continued to improve slowly for four days before he began to again struggle for breath. 'It was a wheeze and then a cough,' he says. 'Before I knew it I was seriously struggling. I did start to suffocate. That was a scary moment.'

But it wasn't time for Stephen to leave us just yet. Suddenly he coughed up the tumour that was blocking his airways. Another crisis had passed.

'It could have gone either way,' he says. 'A couple of seconds and I could have been gone. There are memories there I can flash back to and just think: "Wow, that was close." But after that my breathing was much, much better. It was miraculous.'

His battle against cancer, which has so nearly taken Stephen so many times, is simply a wondrous thing. But that did not make him immune to the cynical world of social media.

Within days of being discharged from hospital on May 2, Stephen was attacked by internet trolls, who claimed they had been 'duped'. Some even asked for their money back. Defending himself on Twitter,

he said: 'So you know, I still have my cancer and it's still incurable if that makes you feel less "duped".'

Today he says: 'Before my story went viral I'd had trolls and nasty comments, but since it's gone bigger I've got a few more. It's mostly driven by ignorance.'

'I've said cancer sucks and life's great. But, actually, life isn't perfect. There's always going to be hate and scepticism out there. But on the whole the goodness has totally swamped the badness. There are so many good people.'

To date, Stephen has achieved all but nine of his goals on his bucket list. Drumming at Wembley Arena - courtesy of a well-wisher - was, he says, his greatest 'pinch me' moment. 'That was just insane,' says Stephen, who's also met a host of celebrities from Jimmy Carr to Roger Daltrey as well as Prime Minister David Cameron.

'My campaign was all about ticking items off the bucket list. But I've done so many cool things that aren't even on the list. Suddenly I had this lifestyle where I was living it up and helping other people. I absolutely loved everything I was doing.'

Then he adds, with a poignant honesty

that characterises this interview and this extraordinary young man: 'I suppose with all the things I've been doing, it's been a very effective coping mechanism for me and my family. I've been so busy there's been no time to have darker thoughts.'

'Now I'm not bothered about the list at all. It's about helping others.'

'I know how fragile I am and how brutal cancer can be. I am so lucky and fortunate to be here. But my cancer is a particularly nasty one. We know what we're up against.'

'If there is a kind of judgment at the end, I've just done what feels right with me. The best way to help yourself is to help others, isn't it?'

This is a lesson we could all learn from this truly awesome teenager who's made more of a difference in his too-short life than many of us will in a lifetime. However many weeks or months he has left on this Earth, he has his place in history as a thoroughly good man.

■ TO DONATE to Stephen's fundraising campaign, visit [www.justgiving.com/Stephen-Sutton-TCT](http://www.justgiving.com/Stephen-Sutton-TCT) or text STEPHEN to 70300 to donate £5 to Teenage Cancer Trust.

# My heart's bursting

By **Lucy Osborne**

HE was the boy whose extraordinary courage in the face of illness inspired a nation.

And yesterday the news that brave Stephen Sutton – who raised millions for charity while battling cancer – had lost his three-and-a-half year fight led to outpourings of grief all over the country.

In an emotional statement, his mother Jane paid tribute to her 'courageous, selfless, inspirational son', saying that her heart was 'bursting with pride but breaking with pain' after he died peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of yesterday morning.

The teenager's heartbreaking story sparked one of the most extraordinary fundraising drives the country has ever seen. In the hours after his death was announced, donations to the 19-year-old's fundraising page soared by more than £200,000, pushing the total the teenager had raised to well over £3.4million and causing the website to temporarily crash.

Politicians, celebrities and members of the public from all over the country also joined in the tributes to the inspirational teenager, with Prime Minister David Cameron saying he had been 'an inspiration'.

Announcing his death, his mother Jane wrote on his Facebook page: 'My heart is bursting with pride but breaking

with pain for my courageous, selfless, inspirational son who passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of this morning, Wednesday 14th May.

'The ongoing support and outpouring of love for Stephen will help greatly at this difficult time, in the same way as it helped

## 'Struck a chord with the nation'

Stephen throughout his journey. We all know he will never be forgotten, his spirit will live on, in all that he achieved and shared with so many.'

Within minutes of posting the message, it had been shared on the social network more than 100,000 times.

Stephen was visited earlier this month at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital by David Cameron. The Prime Minister said he was 'deeply saddened' to hear of the death of the teenager, from Burntwood, Staffordshire, who had been readmitted to hospital last weekend suffering from

## As he loses cancer fight, mother pays tribute to boy who inspired Britain and raised £3m

breathing difficulties after a brief period spent at home.

The Prime Minister said that it had been a privilege to meet Stephen, writing on Twitter: 'A very, very bright light has gone out.' Mr Cameron later told reporters: 'He was determined not to waste a minute, not to waste an hour or a day.'

'I can hardly think of anyone I have met with such a zest for life, with such a belief that you can get things done.'

Labour leader Ed Miliband echoed his sentiment, tweeting: 'Tragic news that Stephen Sutton has passed away.' And Olympic sailor Ben Ainslie, broadcaster Jeremy Vine, comedian Ricky Gervais as well as television presenters Phillip Schofield and Clare Balding posted their messages of condolence.

The teenager's brother, Chris Sutton, 21, wrote on Twitter: 'I could sit here all day typing words like inspirational, proud, but frankly his life and what he achieved speaks for itself.'

The former school athlete was diagnosed with cancer in 2010

when he was just 15, but despite having the tumour removed from his bowel it returned the next year. After being told he didn't have long left to live, he decided to make a bucket list of 46 things he wanted to do before he died, 34 of which he managed to tick off.

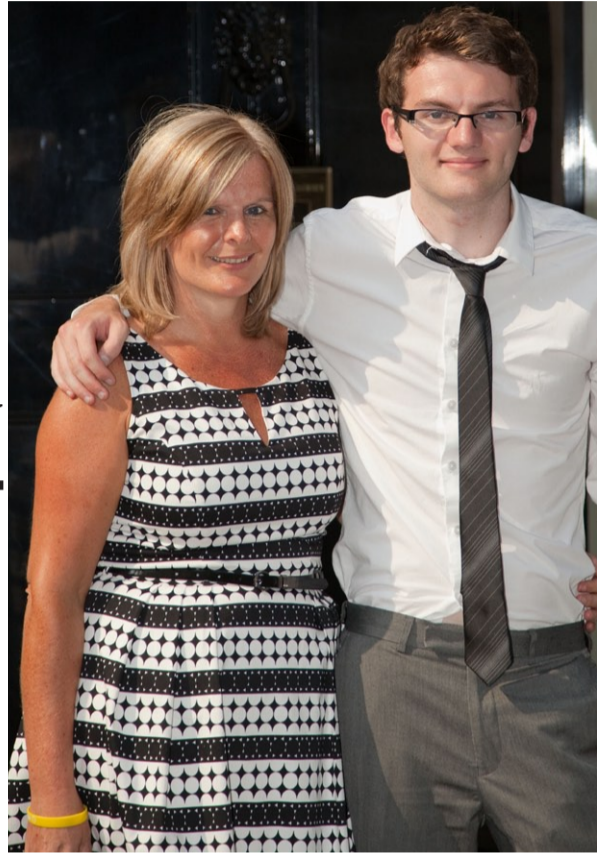
Top of his list was to raise £10,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust. Other items on his bucket

## 'His achievement speaks for itself'

list included learning to juggle, getting a tattoo, a charity skydive and going on a 'lads' holiday.

His Facebook page alone went from 16,000 likes to 989,000 in one month. And as his story went viral on the internet, Stephen captured the imagination of so many people that he surpassed his £10,000 target and decided to aim for £1million.

Last night, his total had hit £3.2million before he passed away – and rose to £3.4million after his



Support: Stephen pictured with his mother Jane

death. The donations to Stephen's JustGivingPage are expected to continue to soar over the coming days. Among the thousands of messages from the public on the fundraising page was one simply saying: 'I'm 69 you're 19 – you've taught me loads.'

The Teenage Cancer Trust said in a statement: 'We are humbled and hugely grateful for what Stephen achieved and continues to achieve for us.'

Their chief executive, Siobhan Dunn, yesterday thanked Stephen for what is now the single largest donation the charity has ever received.

And Deborah Alsina, chief executive of Bowel Cancer UK, described Stephen's death as 'an absolute tragedy'.

She added: 'Stephen's story struck a chord with the nation.'

'In his memory, and in memory of so many other young bowel cancer patients whose lives are needlessly lost, we will continue to raise awareness that you are never too young to develop bowel cancer.'

Comment – Page 14



By **Rebecca Hardy**

SO MANY adjectives have been ascribed to Stephen Sutton: inspirational, amazing, extraordinary. All of these are true, but none of them do him justice.

As long as he was able to draw breath, this 'awesome' (his favourite word) young man was determined to help others and 'do as much good as I can'.

'I genuinely enjoy the feeling of making a positive difference to others,' he told me a few days ago, in what would be his final interview. 'The best way to help yourself is to help others, isn't it?'

We didn't know then that the interview with Stephen, published in Monday's newspaper, would be one of his last acts of goodness.

Stephen, you see, wanted nothing more than to raise more funds for his nominated charity, the Teenage Cancer Trust. He hoped by speaking publicly he would encourage others to donate.

By the time I interviewed him, even speaking was a painful, drawn-out process. Stephen was on morphine for the last week of his life to try to manage his dreadful pain.

He had tumours in his calf, his knee, his groin, his pelvis, his chest wall and his airway.

The latter tumour was of particular concern. He was suffering throughout the hour-and-a-half we spoke with a rasping cough.

Such, though, was this 19-year-old's astonishing determination to tell his story, that whenever I asked if he'd like to rest, he refused.

'I'm relatively healthy on the whole. I've a few breathing difficulties which is probably a hangover from what happened a few weeks ago.'

'Hopefully that should clear up. So, it's hard to put a time on how long I've got. If we're really lucky months,' he said, with the sort of cheerfulness most of those his age would discuss the length of their gap year travel plans.

'I just want to get on with as many projects as I can and focus on the fundraising,' he added.

It was impossible not to be profoundly moved by Stephen, who captured our hearts and minds when he posted a final thumbs up farewell on Facebook believing himself to 'be a goner', particularly as the mother of a 17-year-old boy whose future – university, a career, a happy marriage – I take for granted.

LIKE Stephen was, he is sporty. Like Stephen was, he is ambitious. Like Stephen was, he is a very much-loved son. Goodness only knows how Stephen's mother Jane is coping today.

I know they cared for one another deeply. Indeed, Stephen understood that it took a selfless mother not to 'wrap me in cotton wool, but let me get on and do the things I've managed to do despite my illness'.

How she must have railed ten days ago when despicable internet trolls attacked her son within days of his being discharged from hospital on May 2, claiming they'd been 'duped' by his temporary reprieve and asking for their money back.

Stephen dealt with this appalling reflection of the savagery of social media with mature equanimity.

'Like I say, cancer sucks and life's

## THIS AMAZING MAN... THE REACTION ON TWITTER

**David Cameron said:** I'm deeply saddened to hear that Stephen Sutton has died. His spirit, bravery and fundraising for cancer research were all an inspiration.

**Ed Miliband added:** Tragic news that Stephen Sutton has passed away. His bravery & determination to live life to the full was an inspiration to us all.

**Ricky Gervais posted:** RIP Stephen Sutton. A true hero & inspiration to us all.

**Nick Clegg posted:** Very sad to hear about the death of Stephen Sutton. Such a brave, selfless and inspirational young man.

**Phillip Schofield tweeted:** My thoughts are with the family and friends of the remarkable Stephen Sutton. Would that we could all create such a legacy with such dignity.

**Cricketer Kevin Pietersen added:** So sad to hear the news about Stephen Sutton. What an amazing, selfless and immensely inspirational young man.

**Clare Balding:** Desperately sad to hear Stephen Sutton has died. I feel privileged to have met him and heard him speak.

**Comedian Jason Manford (pictured below with Stephen):** Sleep well friend. xxx



**Many supporters also left tribute on the fundraising page. One said:** Stephen was a truly inspirational young man who achieved so much in such a short time. His positive attitude and spirit has had an incredible impact on millions of people.

**Another wrote:** An incredible young man, incredibly brave. My deepest sympathies to his family and friends. A huge loss, both for them and indeed for us all. He has touched all our hearts.

# with pain and pride

## He really was the most humbling person I have ever interviewed



Courageous: Stephen Sutton when he was in hospital for treatment doing his famous thumbs-up pose

great, but life isn't perfect. On the whole the love and support I received from the four corners of the world swamped the badness,' he said, before adding with such poignant bewilderment I wanted to give him a huge hug: 'It's funny, perhaps I'd be worth more if I died to some people.'

Today I hope those reprehensible trolls hang their heads in shame. This young man achieved more in the 18 months since he was diagnosed with incurable cancer than many of us will in a lifetime.

Indeed, in my years writing for this newspaper I've interviewed many exceptional people, but never have I felt quite as humbled as I was by this thoroughly decent young man.

Even when he revealed 'his anger' over his cancer being shamefully misdiagnosed by doctors as constipation for six crucial months he shrugged and said: 'But even with saying that, I'm not one to dwell on the past. It is what it is.'

And, when I asked how he endured the often excruciating treatment without ever throwing in the towel, he explained: 'It's a kind of investment. You go through that much pain or that much treatment because, at the end of the day, it's going to give you so much extra life

and the extra life is definitely worth it. Life is brilliant.'

He quite simply blew me away. Just this week 70-year-old Cilla Black talked of wanting to die at 75, while TV presenters Richard and Judy revealed they had agreed to help each other die if they became ill. They spoke of death with the casual arrogance of those who have enjoyed long, healthy lives - something Stephen was sadly denied.

But while they might be looking forward to death, Stephen showed us all how to live.

**H**E was, you see, the absolute antithesis of the 'me, me, me' celebrity culture that volubly embraced his campaign, particularly those who began tweeting like crows when his sad death was announced yesterday by his mum.

Stephen was utterly altruistic. There was no attention-seeking agenda. Every single penny of the more than £3.2million he raised went straight to his nominated charity.

First and foremost, Stephen was a rare, selfless young man who, when his diagnosis of incurable cancer put paid to his ambitions to be a

doctor, found his own way of helping others in the precious few months he had left.

So successful was he that, in the last few days of his life, an internet campaign gathered momentum to honour him with a knighthood. In truth, whilst I'm sure he'd have been grateful for the goodwill, I don't believe it's something he'd have valued. Such things are, after all, ephemeral to a 19-year-old who has, if he's 'lucky', months to live. No, I'm sure that anyone who wants to honour Stephen should do so by digging deep in their pocket or doing good.

Remember, number 42 on his now infamous 46-point bucket list was to 'inspire someone to be a doctor or fundraiser'.

When he died he had not quite finished all the things on his list. He didn't care. The fundraising had

taken priority. The last words Stephen said to me, when I thanked him for the almost superhuman effort he'd made for this interview, were 'pleasure. I'm happy to be here'.

We were due to speak again on Sunday when Stephen had read the article to make any amendments he wished. It was, after all, important, that this was his story.

We never spoke again. Instead, I received a phone call to tell me he'd been readmitted to hospital with breathing difficulties.

As he lay there on oxygen literally battling for his life, he insisted upon checking through the article. He desperately wanted others to read it. After making a few notes, there was one change he asked for.

He wanted his hope that he had months to live 'if I'm lucky' replaced with 'any time I do have is a bonus'.

His final post on Facebook was later that day, when he wrote he'd been re-admitted to hospital.

Yesterday, his mother - and God only knows where she found the strength - updated his page with the words: 'My heart is bursting with pride but breaking with pain for my courageous, selfless, inspirational son who passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of this morning.'

Much like his now infamous thumbs-up farewell, her post went viral. Within an hour my 17-year-old son texted me from school to tell me, of his own volition, he'd pinned Stephen's final interview onto the school noticeboard.

'Everyone should read it and be inspired by him,' he tapped out. 'He was so awesome.' Which, of course, Stephen Sutton was.