Dear Gillian,

I am writing to you to let you know how I was diagnosed with MS.

I was 52 years old when I was diagnosed and was working for an oil company, planning and coordinating plant overhauls. One morning I woke up feeling really run down with flulike symptoms. I decided the best thing was to stay out of the office for a few days and let the symptoms run their course. As the day went on I started to loose feeling in my right leg and by the evening I could not move it.

I went to my doctor the next day and she sent me to St John's Hospital where I was admitted and a whole range of tests were started. I was discharged from hospital after four days with no diagnosis or explanation to what caused the loss of feeling in my leg. Some sensation had returned but it was not back to "normal". I was signed off from work for two weeks and a referral letter was sent to the neurology clinic.

A few weeks later I was sent an appointment to see a neurologist and more tests were carried out - close your eyes and touch your nose with the point of your finger, tests for sensation, tests for flexibility on my ankles and strength tests on my arms and legs. I informed my line manager that I was attending a neurologist and I was on a waiting list for an MRI scan. He asked me if I wanted to go a private hospital for the scan. I asked if, to save money, and as the tests had already started, the company would be able to use the same neurologist that I had seen at St John's. He agreed to this.

A week or so later I had an MRI scan at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh and a follow up scan a week after that. At the time of my second scan I was given a lumber puncture. This was carried out in a room cluttered with old equipment, which looked like a storage cupboard.

I had a follow up appointment a week later and further tests on sensation, flexibility and strength were carried out. I was asked to wait in the waiting room where some ladies were being given some sort of intravenous treatment. The neurologist then came along with a nurse and sat down and said, "You have MS. Do you have any questions?"

As I had been dropped off at the hospital by my son and wife, I was on my own and was stunned by the diagnosis. I had some knowledge of MS as my mother lived with the condition for 30 years. So I told the doctor that I had no questions at that time. The MS nurse was on maternity leave so the nurse gave me a copy of the MS Society book *What is MS?* and I was told they would be in touch. I phoned my son and asked him to pick me up and broke the news to them in the car.

I made an appointment to see my GP and she informed me that she did not know a lot about MS but we would learn together. In hindsight I was experiencing symptoms for a long time before the major relapse.

I was medically retired in 2002 and since then I have worked as a steward at a Neolithic burial ground, a royal palace and two castles, only retiring from that position as I was physical unable to do the job.

My wife and I purchased a smallholding in 1981 and over the years have kept pigs, chickens, cows and sheep. We still work the smallholding but only grow grass to make hay and use machinery for the heavy work. I also work part time as a Self Management coordinator for the MS Society. In December 2013 my sister was diagnosed with MS; she is 67.

Alex