

TICKED OFF

IAIN'S STORY



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba



Role: Harvesting and Marketing Forester in Lochaber Forest district
Base: Inverness
Diagnosis: Neurological Lyme Disease

Outdoor Experience:

"I was a Harvesting and Marketing Forester for many years, and then in 2006 I transferred to communities and recreation, and I was out and about in areas like this and harvesting sites. Generally, in amongst long grass and bracken."

My Experience:

"I contracted Lyme Disease in 2007 and got my first symptom, as it turned out, on the first of September 2007. I got a very severe pain underneath my right ear which shot down my neck, and down into my arm, and for the rest of that evening I had a sore shoulder, sore arm, and difficulty lifting anything."

"On the Sunday, I tried to lie down - the pain across my shoulders and down my back was so severe. At this point I thought, "Hmm, better go and see the doctor." The doctor at that point said, "I think you've just pulled a muscle and trapped a nerve." I got some pain killers. By the Wednesday, things hadn't got any better. I still couldn't lie down, spending most of my nights in the armchair. And even that was getting painful."

"I went back and saw my doctor and he gave me some serious painkillers, and told me to take the next three days off work, and to phone him on the Saturday morning to see how I

was. By the Thursday night, I was finding it difficult walking. I phoned the doctor on the Saturday morning and he asked if I could come down to the clinic."

"The doctor had a good look at me, asked quite a few questions, and then said he thought I had Lyme Disease. He put me on antibiotics and admitted me to hospital. From that point on, things start to get a little bit hazy with me. I was starting to lose feeling in my feet, and the paralysis started there. And my mind was starting to get a bit hazy. I wasn't thinking clearly."

"The paralysis started to creep up my body and when it got to my chest, I couldn't breathe. The next thing I remember is coming to on a ventilator to assist my breathing, and then they gave me a tracheotomy to help me breathe, which I had for about two or three weeks. At some point during that time, I got quite serious internal bleeding and so they

had to do emergency surgery. What I do recollect the most was the pain, just the sheer pain, and the hallucinations."

"They did tests and they detected the Lyme Disease bacteria in my spinal fluids, so it was confirmed as Lyme Disease."

"I gradually started to recover. Most of the feeling came back but I still have very limited feeling in the legs from the knees down. Ten years later, I still have mobility problems and balance problems."

"I went off work on about the fourth or fifth of September 2007 and returned to work on a part-time basis in October 2008. I was completely off work for about thirteen months, and then I had three or four months on a part-time basis, gradually working my hours up to normal working hours. I resumed full time work in about January 2009."

Iain's Top Tips

- Know the symptoms of Lyme Disease – it's not just sore joints and feeling tired.
- If you get any symptoms and you've had a tick, go straight to the doctor.
- Be bold – ask for treatment for Lyme Disease.

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