

Please let me grieve for my son

Christine Lord, 58, lost her son Andrew eight years ago. But she's learnt that time is no healer...

You may remember my story. I told it in *Woman's Own* after my beloved son died from BSE. It was an impossibly difficult time – I'd watched as my strong, healthy boy turned into someone unrecognisable.

In the days leading up to Andrew's death in December 2007, he begged me to remember him, and I sobbed as I told him there was no way I could forget him. He was just 24 when he took his last breath.

Since that time, life has moved on – I'm now 58 and Andrew's sister, Emma, is 25. But deep inside, nothing is easier and what I've discovered in these past few years is almost as shocking. But first, let me remind you about my special boy...

Andrew and his younger sister were my whole life. There was seven years

between them, but they were extremely close and, even when Andrew reached his teens, he and Emma stayed close and he took her for outings, to the park or beach.

And it was aged 14 that Andrew decided, like me, he wanted to follow a career in journalism. As he got older, he managed to secure lots of work-experience placements and eventually started researching and producing, and then presenting sports and children's shows.

He was 23 and living at home when, in December 2006, I started noticing changes in him. He seemed tired all the time and began losing weight. Soon, he'd lost interest in work and stopped seeing his friends. 'I don't feel myself, Mum,' he said.

We went back and forth to doctors and, as the months passed, Andrew grew weaker. He started losing his balance and becoming forgetful.

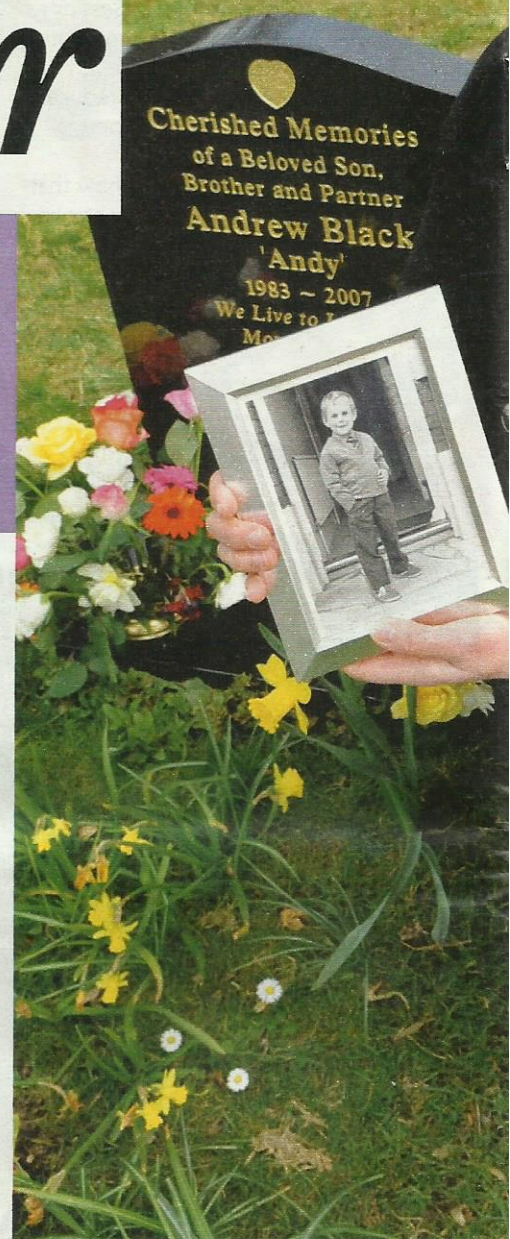
Finally, in May 2007, doctors sent Andrew for an MRI scan and a lumbar puncture. When we went back to get the results 10 days later, the doctor called me into a small room.

'I'm afraid we have bad news,' he started. 'Andrew tested positive for vCJD, the human form of Mad Cow Disease.'

I sat there in shock. It didn't make any sense. Since the scandal in the mid-1990s, none of us had eaten beef.

The doctor couldn't give me an explanation. 'As the disease takes hold of his body, he'll become paralysed,' he said. 'He'll develop dementia.

'He begged me not to forget him'



It's terminal.' Then I stopped listening – I'd just been told my only son was going to die.

Downhill struggle

From then on, Andrew grew more and more sick. First he lost the use of his legs, then he became skeletal thin. With his memory so faded, he was confused most of the time, but there were moments of lucidity.

I couldn't imagine a time when Andrew wouldn't be here, but on 16 December 2007, my beautiful son passed away.

The days that followed passed in a haze. The house was constantly full of grieving friends, neighbours and colleagues. Seeing his coffin go into the ground a week later, I felt broken and, as the months went by,

