

# Bale makes surprise visit to children in hospital

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FOR little Cian Case, Christmas was always going to be different than for the majority of other four-year-old boys.

Unlike most children, brave Cian, from Llanharan, is spending the festive break at Cardiff's University of Wales hospital as he battles against the cancerous spinal and brain tumours he was diagnosed with earlier this month.

It is only the beginning of a long journey for the Case family, who moved to the area from Manchester in 2011, with Cian facing up to eight months of intensive chemotherapy and radiotherapy to ease his symptoms and hopefully beat the disease that threatens his life.

Cian, a pupil at Llanharan Primary School, is in constant pain and has undergone surgery to remove the majority of a tumour that was only found to be growing on his spine after he went to the doctor complaining of stomach pains barely a month ago.

He has also been told "seeds" of the cancer have impregnated his brain.

The surgery resulted in Cian losing all feeling below his waist, with doctors pessimistic over his long-term mobility despite the fact he has gained some sensation.

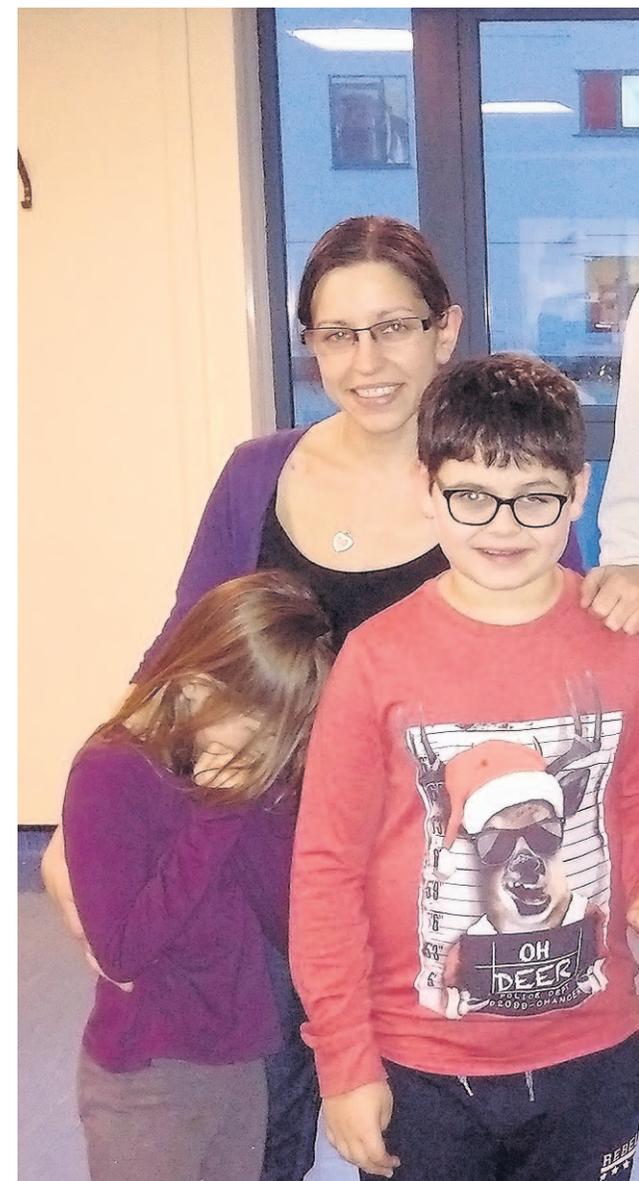
It is a grim predicament, but Cian's family have done everything in their power to make sure this Christmas is still one filled with magic.

And they were helped on their way by a surprise visit from a global football star that left sports-mad Cian and the family stunned on Christmas Eve.

Gareth Bale, along with his partner Emma Rhys-Jones, shocked staff and patients when they arrived on Christmas Eve afternoon to dish out gifts to Cian and some of the other children.

Cian's dad Richard, originally for Merthyr, said: "Most of the VIP visits to the ward over Christmas were pre-planned and we were aware of who would be arriving at any given point, but Gareth turning up on Christmas Eve was a total shock.

"I was in my scruffs as we were just preparing to bath Cian ready to get him into his new PJs and the arrival of Santa. If I had known of



Gareth Bale at The Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales,



Cian and mum Lorraine

Gareth's visit I would have at least been wearing my Wales shirt, which I'd only changed a half hour earlier.

"There was no media accompanying him, so you could tell it was a gesture that he wanted to perform rather than feeling obliged to.

"Gareth was genuinely interested in Cian and his condition and gave him a Spiderman present for Christmas.

"He was also happy to pose for a photo with the family, which his lovely girlfriend volunteered to take."

Following Bale's visit,

Cian's family, - mum Lorraine, a marketing manager at Eversheds LLP law firm, Richard, sister Bethany and brother Dylan, - were all allowed to stay in Cian's hospital room on Christmas Eve night so they could all wake up together on Christmas morning.

Richard said: "Although you would never choose to spend Christmas at hospital, the nurses on Rainbow Ward did everything to make it as special as possible.

"Cian didn't have the strength to open all his presents on Christmas



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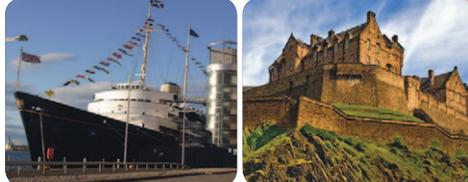
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