

How a visit from Gareth Bale made brave Cian's Christmas

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

Cian is spending the festive break at Cardiff's University Hospital of Wales 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, with Cian facing up to eight months of intensive chemotherapy and radiotherapy to ease his symptoms and hopefully beat the disease.

Cian is in constant pain and has undergone surgery to remove most 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, leaving 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 hand out gifts to Cian and some of the other children.

Cian's dad Richard 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'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, dad 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 continued: "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 Day, but hopefully he will feel a bit better soon to enjoy the rest."

Cian's parents are writing a blog in his name to promote awareness of his condition. You can follow his story at www.ciansstory.uk.

Cian was just one of a number of children Bale spent time with during his visit at about 4.30pm on Thursday.

Lucy Griffiths, whose son Jayden was at the Children's Hospital for Wales with breathing difficulties, said: "It made our Christmas."



➤ Gareth Bale at the Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales, Cardiff. Cian Case is at the front with, from left, Cian's sister Bethany, mum Lorraine, brother Dylan, Gareth Bale and dad Richard

'I just want to know where my boy is - it's like being in limbo'

A terminally ill mother has issued a heartfelt plea to know where her missing son's body is before she dies.

Mystery surrounds the whereabouts of 24-year-old rock music fan Kyle Vaughan - whose crashed car was found abandoned on a country road in South Wales in 2012, prompting detectives to launch a murder investigation.

Today, on the third anniversary of his disappearance, his mother Mary has launched an emotional appeal begging for people to come forward with information.

The 53-year-old former hospital worker, who has advanced liver cancer, has been told by doctors she may have just weeks to live - and said she cannot bear the thought of dying without knowing what has happened to her only child.

She said: "The doctors have said they don't know how long I have left.

Ben Wright
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It could be just weeks. If I'm lucky it might be months.

"I should be able to properly say goodbye to him - to give him a funeral. The thought of not ever finding out is too cruel to contemplate.

"I just want to know where my Kyle is. Someone out there must know something. I want to say to them - put yourself in my shoes."

Factory worker Mr Vaughan, known to his friends as Jabbers, was last seen at his home in Newbridge, Caerphilly, on December 30, 2012.

Later that same night, his damaged silver Peugeot 306 was found on the A467 between Risca and Crosskeys.

It was not clear whether Mr Vaughan had been driving the vehicle, but police said they were confi-



➤ Kyle Vaughan is still missing

dent he would have been able to walk away from the collision.

"I knew straight away something was wrong," said Mrs Vaughan.

"Kyle would always answer his phone no matter what - and even when he went away on holiday with

his friends he would still always call me up every morning to let me know he was safe."

Extensive searches by a team of up to 40 officers followed, as well as numerous public appeals for information.

The major investigation has seen detectives sift through a mountain of evidence - including more than 10,000 lines of telecommunications data, 200-plus hours of CCTV footage and around 2,000 separate items of property.

But despite all this police work, and the numerous public appeals, the agony for Mr Vaughan's family continues.

"Christmas and New Year should be a happy time, but for us it brings back the bad memories of when Kyle first disappeared," said Mrs Vaughan.

"I can't celebrate Christmas any more. The only present I ever want is to get my boy back.

"Being told by police they believe your only child is dead was hard to take, but the uncertainty in not knowing where he is or what has happened has made things worse.

"It's like being constantly in limbo. It makes the grief unbearable.

"I definitely think the stress and the uncertainty has had an effect on my health.

"Someone out there must know what has happened to him or has information which could help the police.

"Please, come forward. You can give information anonymously if needs be. I don't have much time left."

■ **Anyone with information on Mr Vaughan's disappearance is urged to contact Gwent Police on 01633 838111 or the 101 number. People can also give information anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.**