

SAYING THANKS Gavin Rees and some of the pupils taking part in the sponsored fitness day at Bryncthain Primary School. Inset, an X-ray picture showing the metal in Gavin's skull. PICTURE: Paul Rose ©

Teacher raising cash for team of medics who saved his smashed skull

A TEACHER who had his face smashed in a horrific skiing accident has begun a quest to raise cash for those who rebuilt him.

Pupils at his school, Bridgend's Bryncthain Primary, also benefited as half the money from a fundraising fitness day went to them.

"All children aged between seven and 11 took part in the day, learning football and rugby skills and doing agility training, among other things," said Gavin Rees.

"I also held a raffle with about £500 worth of prizes."

Half of the money raised by the sponsored event was given to Swansea's Morriston Hospital, where doctors and nurses treated Gavin after he returned from the French Alps following the accident in 2003.

The 29-year-old, of Roath, Cardiff, is also doing a 1,000-mile sponsored bike ride from Wales to Geneva, Switzerland, in August to help both the Morriston Hospital and the University Hospital of

Geneva.

Surgeons there performed a 19-hour operation to repair multiple fractures in his face and skull after he crashed into another skier.

His injuries were so extensive that 130 screws and 21 plates were used during his surgery – believe to be the highest number used in surgery in Europe.

A month after the accident, Gavin was deemed fit enough to be transferred back to Wales, where he was treated in Swansea.

He said: "It's been an incredible physical journey to get where I am today.

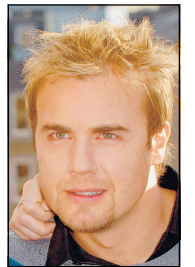
"I've been incredibly lucky. If I wasn't fit and healthy I would have died on the mountainside.

"When I talk to children in school that's one of the ways I encourage them to keep fit. I tell them you wouldn't buy a £40,000 car, smoke and throw rubbish in it.

"I think it helps them understand the importance of exercise."

Take That! will reveal secrets of their success

RE-FORMED band Take That! will be revealing the secrets that made them a household name in a South Wales radio interview.



Gary Barlow

The boy band, which dominated the UK charts in the first half of the '90s, will be on Real Radio from 6pm for an hour-long show on Monday.

Ten years after they shocked their young fans with their sensational split, Gary, Mark, Howard and Jason will tell listeners how they bought a £9,000 van to travel up and down the country performing at any and every gig possible.

Full throttle to win

DRIVING enthusiasts will fight out a bank holiday battle this weekend to win a practice day at a top circuit.

Car Shop Megastore in Penarth Road, Cardiff, will host the Ultimate Driving Experience event where customers will be urged to try their luck in a real F1 simulator.

The driver with the fastest time will win a day on the track in a sports saloon car at the Castle Combe circuit near Bath.

The event ends at 6pm today.

Series of clues ended mystery of lost Iris

Gareth Rogers

A WEDDING ring, a shoe and a set of dentures found next to a pile of bones helped solve a 27-year mystery disappearance.

A skeleton found next to the Heads of the Valleys road, near Hirwaun, in January has been confirmed as that of 68-year-old Pontypridd woman Iris Brick, who went missing in 1979.

A Merthyr Tydfil inquest heard Mrs Brick's remains were discovered on January 26 by David Pugh of Ebbw Vale, who had been catching rabbits between Llwydcoed Road and the A465 Heads of the Valleys road.

He said: "I was heading across the field back to my car when I saw a skeleton, which I thought belonged to a sheep.

"But as I got closer I thought it was big for a sheep's skull and I

Items were near bones

realised that they were human remains."

Mr Pugh added: "I could see a small leather shoe next to the bones, which I thought would belong to a little girl."

The resulting police investigation found a gold wedding ring and a set of repaired dentures at the scene, which were all said to belong to Mrs Brick, who was said to be a slight woman at 5ft 1in.

The bones and the items were sent off for scientific analysis along with a DNA sample from Mrs Brick's son Graham.

Pathologist Dr Andrew Davison performed the examination. He said: "From our DNA tests we found that these bones were 1,500 times more likely to belong to Mr Brick's natural

mother than some other woman, which is strong support."

Major crime investigator Pc Paul Hurley told the court that Mrs Brick was reported missing on December 16, 1979, after Graham turned up at her house to take her to Parc Hospital, Bridgend.

She was known to be a keen walker but her whereabouts had been a mystery until the recent developments.

Coroner Philip Walters returned an open verdict as there was no ascertainable cause of death.

He said: "It is quite possible she had slipped or fallen and remained there."

Mrs Brick's son Graham will now bury her remains in a funeral next week. After the inquest, he said: "It is a great relief to have this all over with as I have had to live with it for 27 years."



The late Iris Brick

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