

BRIDGEND BOY HANGS AFTER BOOZING BINGE

Pal tells of 6-hr session

PAL: Ricky yesterday



TRAGIC: Zachary Barnes

SUICIDE No 17 IN THE TOWN OF NO HOPE

BLEAK: Mirror suicides report



ONE of the 17 Bridgend hanging victims died after knocking back cheap supermarket booze during a six-hour drinking session, an inquest heard yesterday.

Zachary Barnes was with a group of friends, one only 14, who gathered in a park for an evening downing lager. The 17-year-old was later found hanging from a washing line.

Friend Ricky Tovey told the inquest how he, Zach and another mate bought the giant economy pack of Carlsberg at a Tesco before joining two others.

The 16-year-old said: "We drank them at the recreation ground. We stayed there until 12.40pm and got through the whole lot."

"I wasn't the youngest. One of the others was 14."

Ricky said at one point Zach climbed on to a wall with a T-shirt around his neck. He added: "We stopped him. We'd drunk a lot."

"We had got separated on our way back home and when I woke up I texted his dad to see if he was home OK. His dad told me he wasn't there."

Zach's dad Paul, 49, called police to report his son missing. He was found dead two hours after a police officer left their house. Pathologist Dr Stephen

By RICHARD SMITH

Rees said his alcohol level was double the drink-drive limit. The youngster became the eighth of 17 hanging victims in the South Wales town blighted by a string of apparent suicides.

But Bridgend coroner Phillip Walters said he could not be certain Zach intended to take his own life.

Recording a narrative verdict, he added: "To find a verdict of suicide I have to find clear evidence of intention. His alcohol level could well have affected his judgement and mood."

Outside, Zach's mum Mandy, 38, said: "Was it an accident, a prank? We don't know. Nobody can get over this. It's ripped my heart out."

Ricky added: "Zach was a happy guy, really funny. I don't know why he did it."

He told how boredom usually led youngsters to drink in the town. Ricky added: "I started when I was 15. They need to provide more stuff for us to do to get us off the streets."

● MORE than 100 people yesterday attended the funeral of Bridgend's 16th hanging victim Nathaniel Pritchard, 15, in the town.

richard.smith@mirror.co.uk

BOOZE DEAL
Tesco stores across the country were yesterday selling 24 cans of Carlsberg lager for £15.48 - that's just 64.5p per can.

KILLER GANG JAILED

THE family of a murdered disabled man yesterday celebrated as his callous killers were handed long jail terms.

Vulnerable Brent Martin, 23, was punched, kicked, head-butted and stamped on by three young thugs he thought were friends.

All were given life in jail with minimum terms set.

Judge John Milford said ringleader

BEATEN: Brent and killer Hughes



William Hughes, 22, must serve at least 22 years. Marcus Miller, 16, must spend at least 15 years inside and Stephen Bonallie, 17, at least 18 years. Outside Newcastle crown court, Mr Martin's friends and relatives cheered and opened champagne.

Brent, who had a long history of mental problems, was attacked by the drunken gang as he walked across a Sunderland housing estate.

They bet each other to knock him out for £5, the court heard.

Cut choice on schools

CHILDREN from poor families who cannot afford homes near the best state schools should still be let in to them, an expert said yesterday.

Chief inspector of schools, Philip Hunter, said parents should get less choice as it "leads to segregation". He believes it is the only way to stop poor pupils being bunched together in sink schools.

He wants rules changed so schools have a mix of ability and background.

CRANE SMASH

A CRANE toppled over and crashed through the roof of a newly-built house in Broadstairs, Kent, yesterday. No one was hurt.

Book now for Easter.
Rooms for just

£19



Make it a good Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday...

Book now for stays between 21st March-20th April 2008.



Travelodge

Before you go anywhere, go to travelodge.co.uk

The £19 rates are only available at selected hotels on selected nights, must be booked at least 18 days before the date of arrival and are only available online at www.travelodge.co.uk. Stay dates are between Friday 21 March 2008 and Sunday 20 April 2008. Subject to availability. This offer is non commissionable and cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount scheme. £19 rates must be paid for by a credit or debit card at the time of booking and cannot be refunded or transferred. Information correct at time of print.