

Rock drummer died after drinking 40 measures of vodka

A drinking spree killed the rock star John Bonham, an inquest heard yesterday. The drummer with the Led Zeppelin group died through inhaling vomit after drinking about 40 measures of vodka in 12 hours, the inquest at Windsor was told.

The East Berkshire coroner, Mr Robert Wilson, recorded a verdict of accidental death.

The court had heard from the Led Zeppelin guitarist, Jimmy Page, how Mr Bonham, aged 32, turned up "pretty tipsy" for rehearsals at a Windsor studio.

Mr Bonham's personal assistant, Mr Rex King, told how he and Mr Page's assistant had to put Bonham to bed after he dozed off on a sofa at Page's Windsor mansion on September 25.

Mr King said that Bonham had first started drinking that day at around noon in a pub near his home at Old Hyde Farm, Cutnall Green, Worcestershire. Asked by the coroner how much Bonham had drunk, Mr King replied: "Around four to five quadruple vodkas with orange."

He said he drove Bonham to the studios, where the star once again began drinking vodka and orange. "He had two or three large ones." After rehearsing with other members of the group they left to go to Page's home, where Bonham continued drinking.

Mr King said that in a period of four hours Bonham "had a couple of large ones" an hour, finishing about midnight. "He dozed off on a sofa, and we thought it would be best to put him to bed." Bonham had eaten only a couple of ham and salad rolls during the day, and had fish and chips or a pie while at Page's home.

Mr Albert Hobbs, Mr Page's



John Bonham — "drank about 40 vodkas"

assistant, described Bonham as a heavy drinker whose tipples was vodka or brandy. He said it was difficult to tell if he was drunk because he was so used to drink.

The next morning the band's road manager, Mr Ben Lefevre, tried to wake Bonham but noticed something wrong, could not feel a pulse, and called an ambulance.

Dr Edmund Hemstead, pathologist, said that Bonham died through inhaling vomit. One test showed an alcohol level of 276 milligrams per hundred millilitres in a sample taken from the bladder.

Dr Hemstead said: "This indicated he inhaled the vomit but didn't die immediately as the result of that, and that he died some hours later due to the shocked state on inhaling vomit, during which time the alcohol in his blood would have broken down." The pathologist added that a trace of a tension-relieving drug had been found.