

British Cave Rescue Council

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR CAVE RESCUE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

Incident Report for Period 1st January 1996 - 31st December 1996

	Cave Rescue Organisation	Cornwall Mineshaft RU	Cumbria Ore Mines RU	Derbyshire CRO	Devon CRO	Gloucestershire CRG	Irish CRO	Mendip RO	Midlands CRO	North Wales CRO	Scottish CRO	South East CRO	South Wales CRO	Swaledale FRO	Upper Wharfedale FRA	West Cornwall Mines RG	Others ⁽¹⁾	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	10	1	2	6	2	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	5	1	2	-	2	38
Persons Assisted	17	0	3	3	10	6	-	12	-	-	-	-	7	0	4	-	2	64
Fatalities	1	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	1
Persons Injured ⁽²⁾	4	0	1	2	1	2	-	0	-	-	-	-	2	0	0	-	1	13
Helicopter assistance ⁽³⁾	1																1 ⁽¹⁾	2 ⁽¹⁾
Animal Incidents	8	1	0	1	0	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	1	0	2	-	5	18
Assistance to other teams																		
Totals Underground Incidents	18	2	2	7	2	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	6	1	4	-	7	56
Surface Incidents	14	0	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13	11	-	x	40
Persons Assisted	19	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	18	9	-	x	47
Fatalities	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2	-	x	4
Persons Injured	12	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	5	7	-	x	24
Surface Animal Incidents	0	1	-	0	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	-	x	5
Assistance to other teams	1 ⁽⁴⁾												1 ⁽⁵⁾					1 ⁽⁵⁾
Totals Surface Incidents	14	1	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	14	11	-	-	46

Notes:

- (1) The "others" column reflects underground rescues carried out by member teams of the MRC and whose incident reports have been submitted to the BCRC. These are shown in the incident list (14, 32)
- (2) Injuries include those assisted for a medical condition, but excludes cavers assisted through exhaustion.
- (3) Row records use of helicopter to evacuate casualty, figure in brackets is the number of calls to the RAF included in the total.
- (4) CRO Dog handlers were called out to assist Furness MRT in the search for an elderly female, who was found safe.
- (5) SWCRO was asked to assist the National Park in the removal of an abandoned vehicle from the river at Trecastle Road End. This has been included in the incident totals.

Further details relating to this incident report or about the BCRC and its membership can be obtained from the Hon Secretary, Pete Allwright, Pearl Hill, Dent, Sedbergh, Cumbria LA10 5TG; telephone 015396 25412.

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Summary of Incident Report, 1996

1. There was 1 underground fatality in 1996:

- a caver who fell some 20 feet off the second pitch in Quaking Pot, North Yorkshire suffering serious head injuries.

2. Of the 38 underground incidents, some 6 involved non-caving activity - refer to 8, 9, 14, 15, 27 and 37.

3. Non-fatal injuries and medical emergencies occurred underground were:

Facial burns	1	Dislocated knee	1
Shoulder injuries	2	Lower leg fractures	2
Serious back injuries	2	Cuts and bruises	1
Fractured ribs/pneumothorax	1	Medical condition	2
Pelvic injuries	1		

4. The main causes of incidents recorded in 1996 were:

Falls of various causes	10	Hung up on SRT rope	1
Overdue	6	Lost/light failure	1
Lost	2	Investigation	3
Physically stuck	2	Assist police -	
Rock falls	2Missing person search	2
Exhausted	3other	2
Medical emergencies	2	Total	38
Other injuries	1		
Flooding	1		

5. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.

6. The underground animal incidents involved 6 dogs, 3 sheep, 11 lambs, 2 geese and 1 rabbit(!).

7. 'Surface Incidents' include fell/moorland rescues and searches. Teams, chiefly in the north, carry out these duties as part of their normal workload. These incidents are also recorded in the Mountain Rescue Council Incident Report for 1996.

8. Alerts and standbys not involving a team callout are not recorded. Also those incidents dealt with by local knowledge over the telephone and not involving a team callout are not recorded.

Quick Summary	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Underground Caving Incidents	44	28	50	48	44	47	73	57	39	46	53	47	45	38
No. persons	109	63	125	104	109	123	184	153	87	104	129	111	109	64
No. of fatalities	1	3	3	4	0	4	1	3	2	2	2	5	5	1
No. injured	18	3	18	11	19	14	19	14	10	12	16	20	13	13
Divers assisted incidents			3	1				2		2	1		1	
and add:														
Cave diving incidents			1		1	1	3	1		1		1		
No persons			1		1	1	3	1		1		1		
Diving fatalities			1		0	1	0	0		1		1		

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Summary of Incidents for 1996

- 1. Monday, 8th January 1996 at 00:30 by COMRU (5 hours)**
Goldscope Copper Mine, Keswick, rock fall
2 cavers were exploring old workings beyond Wheelpit Chamber when second caver crawling through level dislodged stemple causing a slow collapse. He managed to escape to daylight but second man was trapped in a blind heading. Team dug way through to release second caver (m, 30).
- 2. Sunday, 14th January, 1996 at 18:30 by MRO (1 ¼ hours)**
Swildons Hole, exhaustion
Female diabetic caver was reported as completely exhausted on the return from a trip to sump 1. Assisted to the surface.
- 3. Sunday, 21st January 1996 at 13:45 by CRO (3 hours)**
Ireby Fell Cavern, fall while abseiling, recognised club
Caver (f, 45) lost control while abseiling first pitch and fell some 20 ft suffering an open leg fracture, an ankle fracture and a compression injury to the spine. Stretched out and evacuated to Preston by Lancashire Police helicopter.
- 4. Saturday, 27th January 1996 by SWCROWB (2 hours)**
*OFD II, party overdue, recognised club **
Party (m20, f21, f19, f18) overdue from a trip to Northern Lights in OFD II. Found and escorted out.
- 5. Sunday, 3rd March, 1996 by MRO (1 hour)**
Rhino rift, party overdue
Party on SRT reported as overdue; found at farm during initial recce prior to full callout.
- 6. Monday, 4th March 1996 at 01:21 by CRO (4 ¼ hours)**
Lancaster Hole, lost & light failure
Five cavers on Lancaster to County Pot through trip lost their way around Fall Pot, some 8 ½ hours into trip with lights fading. Two of party made their way out via County since they had pulled the rope down Lancaster Hole. CRO called to provide lights and give assistance at Lancaster Hole. Cavers (m27, m25, f22) escorted out.
- 7. Sunday, 24th March 1996 at 14:00 by CRO (4 hours)**
Lost Johns, fall while abseiling, recognised club
Caver (f,22) abseiled out of control down Mud Pot and fell some 30 ft, suffering crushed vertebrae and fractured pelvis. Carried to surface and awaiting ambulance.
- 8. same day at 10:00 by SFRO (4 ½ hours)**
Buttertubs North Yorkshire, assist police
Called to assist the police in the recovery of stolen goods thrown down the 40 ft pothole.
- 9. Sunday, 31st March 1996 at 14:30 by CRO (2 hours)**
Hunt Pot, investigation
Walker found a map case in Hunt Pot shakehole and wondered whether someone had fallen down shaft. Search found no-one.
- 10. same day at 23:30 by SWCROWB (1 hour)**
OFD II, overdue, recognised club
Party (4m) completed traverse of OFD Top on through trip but could not locate route to Cwm Dwr entrance. Quickly found and escorted to surface.
- 11. Friday, 5th April 1996 at 01:15 by COMRU (5 ¼ hours)**
Coniston Copper Mine, rock fall
2 persons were reported overdue from a trip into the mine. Information was passed onto Mountain Rescue who performed a surface and brief underground search unsuccessfully. COMRU search the mine workings and found the missing party on the last pitch of the Levers Water Mine through trip. They had pulled through down four pitches to find their exit blocked by a collapse. 1 caver (m) suffered facial injuries when an acetylene generator he was using became pressurised and exploded. Party found escorted to surface daylight.
- 12. Sunday, 7th April 1996 by MRO**
Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire, lost
Wiltshire police reported a party of 4 youths presumed lost in the mine. A team was deployed, but in the meantime, a gentleman living locally and having knowledge of the mines entered the workings and located the missing youths near to the Cathedral.
- 13. Saturday, 13th April 1996 at 15:05 by CRO (2 ¼ hours)**
Bull Pot of the Witches, fall, recognised club
Caver (m, 52) fell while climbing on daylight entrance pitch suffering multiple rib fractures and a pneumothorax. Successfully evacuated to waiting ambulance.
- 14. Sunday, 28th April 1996 at 19:07 by RAF Valley (1 ½ hours)**
Mineshaft at Tanygrisiau Blaenau Ffestiniog North Wales, fall
RAF Valley MRT were returning to base following weekend exercise when informed of an incident in which a youth had fallen and become trapped in an old mineshaft. Casualty was successfully evacuated by North Wales Police and Ambulance personnel before team arrived at scene.
- 15. Sunday, 15th May 1996 at 10:00 by Derbyshire CRO (1 hour)**
Bull Ring Cave, Dove Holes, assist police
Dove Holes Community Association asked the police about the cave entrance where local children had started playing to see if it was dangerous. It was duly inspected and a report made.
- 16. Sunday, 9th June 1996 at 14:35 by SWCROWB (4 ½ hours)**
OFD II, medical emergency, recognised club
Caver (m) dislocated shoulder in the OFD Main Streamway; casualty was assisted out of the cave.
- 17. Tuesday, 1st June 1996 at 15:30 by SWCRO/GW**
Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn, Ebbw Vale, investigation
Some local children reported seeing a man descend a rift but not come out - checked by Ebbw Vale police and Gwent team but no one found.
- 18. same day at 15:42 by Devon Cave Rescue (3 hours)**
Pridhamsleigh Cavern, Buckfastleigh, fall, youth group
Caver (m,19) slipped and fell in Lake Chamber dislocating knee. Assisted to surface by Devon CRO.
- 19. Wednesday, 3rd July, 1996 at 22:50 by GCRG (1 hour)**
Wigpool Iron Mine, lost, recognised club
Party (1m, 1f) became lost in mine system and eventually reported overdue. Quickly found 15 minutes from surface and escorted out.
- 20. Thursday, 4th July 1996 at 02:30 by GCRG (10 hours)**
Wetsink, Slaughter Stream Cave, fall, recognised club
Caver (m, 36) fell 8 metres whilst attempting to free climb down the wrong pot sustaining cuts and bruises. Fellow caver (m, 32) climbed down to render assistance and suffered similar fate this time falling some 6 metres and sustaining a compound fracture of the tibia/fibia. Third member of party (m, 31) did not know the way out. Other members of the club also in the system when in search of the party when the became overdue and initiated GCRG callout on discovering the extent of the accident. Both casualties were duly evacuated after a long rescue, assisted by the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue.
- 21. Friday, 12th July, 1996 at 20:30 by Derbyshire CRO (2 hours)**
Merlin Mine, Eyam, party overdue
Party (3m) reported overdue by mother of one member after failing to report home. The Mine was searched as far as pitches and clear pools. Nothing was found. Meanwhile, police had searching known parking spots in the area and had found no vehicles. Team stood down shortly afterwards when it was discovered the party's car had broken down on route home.
- 22. Thursday, 18th July 1996 at 20:33 by CRO (3 ¾ hours)**
Simpsons Pot, caver hung up
Two cavers (m,29, m38) on pull through trip were unable to negotiate Slit Pot - one caver became hung up at pitch head. He was quickly freed when the team reached the site and the pair were evacuated over the top of Slit Pot. Both the cavers were reported as 'rather large'.

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23. Thursday, 25th July 1996 at 14:35 by Derbyshire CRO (2 hours)

Jug Holes, Matlock, investigation

Tourist thought he saw a light in the entrance chamber. He shouted but got no response so an hour later after walking to Matlock he contacted the police and raised an alarm. A small team were turned out and a search found nothing.

24. Saturday, 3rd August 1996 at 13:00 by CRO (4 ½ hours)

Quaking Pot, fall from pitch, recognised club

Caver (f,24) fell some 20ft from the laddered second pitch suffering serious head injuries including a fractured skull. Fatal.

25. Tuesday, 3rd September 1996 at 09:30 by UWFRA (1 ½ hours)

Providence Pot/Dowbergill Passage, party overdue

4 cavers (m29, m28, m29, m28) planning a Providence/Dow through trip and set off at 9am on the 2nd. When they had not returned by 09:00 the next day UWFRA were alerted. When the team arrived at Kettlewell, the party emerged having lost their way and having to retrace their steps.

26. Saturday, 7th September 1996 at 14:45 by Derbyshire CRO (1 hour)

Devonshire Cavern, Matlock, physically stuck,

Large caver became stuck in a small hole at the end of the system. Eventually freed himself and met the advance rescue team when making his way out.

27. Sunday, 8th September 1996 at 14:30 by Devon CRO (3 hours)

Bennetts Cross, Postbridge, missing person

Called out to assist Dartmoor Rescue Team searching for missing walker (m,78) to search mines in the area. Walker eventually found his own way off the moor.

28. Sunday, 15th September 1996 at 13:50 by SWCRO/GW (5 hours)

Agen Allwedd, fall, Youth Group

Caver (f, 13), a member of an Air Training Corp trip, slipped suffering possible lower leg injuries. However, casualty was able to walk out with assistance. Assisted by Longtown Mountain Rescue.

29. Saturday, 21st September 1996 at 23:40 by MRO (1 hour)

Swildons Hole, party overdue

Party reported overdue from a trip to the Watergate Series. Found safe and well having underestimated the time for their trip.

30. Thursday, 3rd October 1996 at 01:00 by GCRG (3 hours)

Ban-y-Gor Cave, physically stuck, recognised club

Caver (m) became physically stuck in the 'Stopper' some 200 metres from the entrance of this notoriously tight rift cave. Cavers was able to gain enough height with assistance to free himself and was then helped to the surface. Assisted by the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue and ambulance service.

31. Friday, 4th October 1996 at 22:45 by Derbyshire CRO (3 ½ Hours)

Rowter Hole, Castleton, medical emergency, recognised club

Caver (m,32) taken ill while abseiling the 225ft shaft and could not climb back out. His condition deteriorated and the symptoms indicated a heart attack. Excellent support from the fire service and from paramedics who were willing to abseil the shaft under escort allowed the casualty to be successfully evacuated.

32. Thursday, 10th October 1996 at 15:30 by NESRA (4 ½ hours)

cave at Peak Scar, North York Moors, fall, special school

A small group from a special school on a caving outing in crag. One (m, 13) fell down 20ft shaft at end of cave, sustaining fractured collar bone and bruising. Team evacuated casualty to waiting Sea King helicopter from RAF Leconfield.

33. Sunday, 20th October 1996 at 17:47 by CRO (2 ½ hours)

Lower Long Churn Cave, flooding, recognised club

Light rain in the morning became heavier in the afternoon causing the cave to flood, entrapping a party of 6 (5m, f). CRO entered the cave as the flood levels fell and met the party making their way out of the cave.

34. Thursday, 14th November 1996 at 13:20 by Derbyshire CRO (3 hours)

Peak Cavern, Castleton, fall, recognised club

Caver (m, 46) fell over while waiting for companion. Became concussed as a result and wandered further into the cave. Companion raised alarm when he could not find him. DCRO initiated search and found caver at Squaw's Junction, from where he was able to make his own way out with assistance.

35. Saturday, 16th November 1996 at 18:24 by CRO (2 hours)

Alum Pot, caver exhausted

Caver (m,37) SRTing out of Diccan Pot became exhausted in high water conditions, so he returned to Alum Pot to await assistance.

36. same day at 23:40 by CRO (3 hours)

Cow Pot, Casterton Fell, fall from surface, recognised club

Caver (m,18) returning across the fell after surfacing at Pool Sink fell some 70ft down the open shaft at Cow Pot in thick mist. He suffered relatively minor injuries, including a small pelvic fracture) and was successfully evacuated.

37. Monday, 2nd December 1996 at 18:00 by Cornwall

Mineshaft Rescue Unit (6 ½ hours)

minshafts near St Ives, missing person

Called by the police to search minshafts for missing person; found by police during search.

38. Tuesday, 17th December 1996 at 21:30 by UWFRA (6 hours)

Providence Pot/Dowbergill, exhaustion

Cavers (4m) negotiating the through trip from Providence Pot to Dow Cave became exhausted, resulting in one slipping and becoming stuck. At this point they decided to sit and await assistance, which was duly rendered.

(affiliated clubs based on NCA Members List dated 08-12-96)