

# British Cave Rescue Council

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR CAVE RESCUE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

## Incident Report for Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 1997 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 1997

	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 <sup>(1)</sup>	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	11	0	-	7	1	1	-	6	0	1	0	-	6	-	3	-	1 <sup>(5)</sup>	36
Persons Assisted	18	-	-	7	1	5	-	10	0	2	0	-	10	-	6	-	2	61
Fatalities	1	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	1
Persons Injured <sup>(2)</sup>	3	-	-	2	1	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	7
Helicopter assistance <sup>(3)</sup>	1(1)	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	1(1)
Animal Incidents	11	1	-	1	0	1	-	0	2	0	1	-	2	-	2	-	0	21
Assistance to other teams	0	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	
<b>Totals Underground Incidents</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>57</b>
Surface Incidents	25	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	9	15		x	52
Persons Assisted	28	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 <sup>(4)</sup>	-	-	1	-	0	28	12		x	69
Fatalities	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	1	-	0	0	2		x	4
Persons Injured	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	0	8	6		x	30
Surface Animal Incidents	0	5	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	0	0	1		x	6
Assistance to other teams	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	0	0	0			
<b>Totals Surface Incidents</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>						<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>			<b>58</b>

### 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. See item 5 below.
- (2) Injuries include those assisted for a medical condition, but exclude 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) MRO were one of a number of search and rescue teams involved in a search for 40 Air Cadets who became lost on Blackdown in poor weather. All were located successfully but three suffered hypothermia and were treated with Little Dragon warm air resuscitation.
- (5) NWCRO and the South Snowdonia rescue team were jointly responsible for the rescue of 2 men marooned in a mine (incident 34).

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, 1997

- There was 1 underground fatality in 1997:
  - a caver who fell some 22m suffering multiple fatal injuries; incident 17.
- Of the 36 underground incidents, some 5 involved non-caving activity – incidents 9, 11, 24, 26 and 30.
- The main causes and injuries sustained over recent years are recorded here. Both tables are necessarily a summary to give a comparison. **The database of incidents has been reviewed in the process of building this information and figures given in these tables may vary from those previously published.** The *Injuries Incurred* table includes fatalities and exposure/hypothermia incidents.

**Table 1 : Incident Causes**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
assist police		1	2	2	3
cave diving		1			
equipment failure					1
exposure/exhausted	5	6		3	3
fall	10	11	9	11	4
flooding	1	3	1	1	4
hung up	3		1	1	
light failure				1	
lost or overdue	8	12	13	8	9
medical emergency	1	4	3	2	2
missing person	1	3	3	2	
other	1	2	2	4	2
physically stuck	2	3	4	2	3
rock fall		2	4	2	2
self marooning	1				3
unable to climb	1		3		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>

**Table 2: Injuries Incurred**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
arm lower/wrist	1	1	3		
arm/humerous/shoulder		1	4	2	
Chest Injuries	1		1	1	
Drowned	1	2	3		
Exhaustion/hypothermia	5	4	3	1	2
femur/pelvic injuries	3	1	1	1	1
Head Injuries	2	2	1	2	1
leg(lower)/ankle	3	5	1	3	1
Medical condition	1	1	2	1	1
Multiple Serious		2	2	1	2
Spine/back injuries	2	4		1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>

- The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
- The underground animal incidents involved 8 dogs, 7 lambs, 3 sheep, 3 calves and 1 horse.
- '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 1997.
- 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	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Underground Caving Incidents	44	47	73	57	39	46	53	47	45	38	36
No. persons	109	123	184	153	87	104	129	111	109	64	61
No. of fatalities	0	4	1	3	2	2	2	5	5	1	1
No. injured	19	14	19	14	10	12	16	20	13	13	7
Divers assisted incidents				2		2	1		1		
and add:											
Cave diving incidents	1	1	3	1		1		1			
No persons	1	1	3	1		1		1			
Diving fatalities	0	1	0	0		1		1			

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## Summary of Incidents for 1997

- 1. Sunday 2 February by CRO at 12.25 (3.45 hours)**  
*Ireby Fell Cavern, fall, club, affiliated,*  
Caver (m37) fell 24m from traverse on the Shadow Route pitch, suffering severe multiple injuries. After casualty care and carefully placing in spinal splint was evacuated. Helicopter from RAF Leconfield took patient to Preston RI.
- 2. Monday 10 February by CRO at 01.46 (8.00 hours)**  
*Large Pot/New Rift Pot, Ireby Fell, self marooning, club affiliated,*  
Club had arranged a through trip with parties descending Large and Rift Pots. Party of cavers (m27, m25, m20) descended Large Pot and made their way through, but did not meet the party descending Rift Pot. Meanwhile, heavy rain caused water in the connecting crawl to rise. They were found at the bottom of the big pitch in Rift Pot after Large Pot had been searched.
- 3. Saturday 22 February by SWCROWB at 20.15 (0.45 hours)**  
*OFD I to II, lost or overdue, club, affiliated,*  
Party of six attempting the connection between OFD I and II failed to find the route and had to return to Cwm Dwr, causing them to be overdue. Arrived at base as search party was departing.
- 4. Saturday 8 March by DerbyCRO at 22.05 (1.30 hours)**  
*P8, Castleton, exposure/exhausted, individuals,*  
Party of 4 were on way out of cave when one (f18) was unable to climb the first pitch. Shoes came off and 'drysuit' filled with water. Companions managed to pull her up the pitch, but she was unable to make further progress out of the cave. Assisted out by team. Caver who stayed with her (m22) was diabetic and suffered low blood-sugar and also needed assistance.
- 5. Saturday 15 March by SWCROWB at 21.00 (1.30 hours)**  
*OFD II, lost or overdue, scout,*  
Party overdue because of route finding problems. Found and escorted out.
- 6. Thursday 27 March by CRO at 23.50 (3.30 hours)**  
*Kingsdale Master Cave, flooding, individuals,*  
Cavers (2m) trapped by flooding. Found on ledge in Master Cave and assisted out as water levels fell.
- 7. Sunday 6 April by DerbyCRO at 17.40 (1.20 hours)**  
*P8, Castleton, other, scout,*  
Instructor and 3 novices (f18, f15, m15) bottomed P8. On way out they found their tackle had been removed from the first pitch. The instructor was able to free climb the pitch and raise the alarm. A quick rescue was then effected.
- 8. Sunday 13 April by DerbyCRO at 19.05 (13.15 hours)**  
*Nettle Pot, equipment failure, adventure training,*  
Caver (m33) was climbing electron ladder left in Firbeck Hall when it failed, causing him to fall 4m suffering a fractured humerus and pelvic injuries. A difficult rescue especially lifting the casualty up the tight 60m entrance shaft.
- 9. Saturday 19 April by DerbyCRO at 16.25 (0.45 hours)**  
*cave off St Johns Road, Matlock, other, non-caver,*  
DCRO received a report of a party lost in a cave off St Johns road in Matlock Bath. The report came in a circuitous route via the sister of one of the party in Essex, who on dialing 999 was initially passed to the coastguard. When the call was eventually routed to Ripley control room, a callout was commenced. Meanwhile at the behest of the DCRO controller, Derbyshire police rang the mobile phone from whence the missing party was reported. They did and could hear "sounds of a public bar" in the background. The culprits were routed out of the pub and were given a formal warning. A practical joke that went wrong and could have had serious consequences.
- 10. Saturday 19 April by SWCROWB at 17.36 (0.45 hours)**  
*OFD II, lost or overdue, club, affiliated,*  
Five cavers overdue - under-estimated length of trip. They came out of the cave as rescue party was about to go down.
- 11. Sunday 20 April by MRO at 18.00 (0.15 hours)**  
*Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire, assist police, non-caving incident,*  
Contacted by Wiltshire Police to search the mines. There was a possibility that a number of children were lost in Box Mines, since two childrens coats had been found near the entrance. Stood down shortly after callout since the owners of the coats had been located.
- 12. Sunday 27 April by MRO at 18.45 (1.00 hours)**  
*Swildons Hole, lost or overdue, not known,*  
Informed of a white van whose owners had gone for a short photographic trip in the Upper Series. A search was made and the party were found in Water Chamber fit and well.
- 13. Friday 2 May by CRO at 23.20 (3.30 hours)**  
*Simpsons Pot, Kingsdale, self marooning, individuals,*  
Solo caver (m38) attempting through trip to Kingsdale Master Cave abseiled into Bobs Pit, a blind pot on the main route through. In the process he became marooned. He spent some 15 hours before the rescue team located and escorted him out. This was a Bank Holiday Saturday and no other cavers passed by in this popular cave!
- 14. Saturday 3 May by SWCROWB at 15.45 (2.00 hours)**  
*Railway Dig, rock fall, club, affiliated,*  
Caver (m) suffered back injuries in a rock fall. Returned to SWCC hut and attended by team doctor. No further treatment required.
- 15. Saturday 17 May by UWFRA at 21.00 (0.05 hours)**  
*Dow Cave, Dowbergill Passage, physically stuck, club affiliated,*  
Whilst caving in Dow Cave/Providence Pot, cavers lost their way. Female slipped and became trapped. She was released by her colleagues and the party made their way out of the cave before the rescue team entered.
- 16. Monday 26 May by DerbyCRO at 20.15 (0.30 hours)**  
*P8, Castleton, lost or overdue, individuals,*  
Party of two (m40, F19) reported overdue. They had mis-estimated the time for the trip. Met first rescue team members on the surface.
- 17. Saturday 31 May by CRO at 14.00 (4.00 hours)**  
*Lancaster Hole, fall, club, affiliated,*  
Caver (m31) descending entrance when he became detached from the rope at a re-belay point and fell 22m suffering serious multiple injuries. **Fatal.**
- 18. Sunday 1 June by CRO at 23.32 (1.00 hours)**  
*Gingling Hole, Fountains Fell, lost or overdue, club, affiliated,*  
A party of 4 cavers (3m,f) reported overdue; found on surface on track from Dalehead to the cave.
- 19. Saturday 7 June by UWFRA at 21.00 (4.00 hours)**  
*Dow Cave, Dowbergill Passage, lost or overdue, not known,*  
Party of cavers (3m, f) became overdue and alarm was raised. Team made search of cave and found them exhausted but unharmed.
- 20. Sunday 13 July by CRO at 21.29 (4.00 hours)**  
*Black Shiver Pot, flooding, individuals,*  
Party of two (m40, m27) reported overdue. They were found at the bottom of the fourth pitch, sitting out after being caught by a flash flood. They were assisted to the surface.

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- 21. Saturday 19 July by CRO at 18.45 (2.30 hours)**  
*Simpsons Pot, Kingsdale, physically stuck, club affiliated,*  
Caver (m25) became stuck as he tried to pass through the head of Slit Pot. He was pulled free by his friends before team arrived. Met CRO party in Kingsdale Master Cave.
- 22. Sunday 20 July by SWCROWB at 18.00 (2.00 hours)**  
*Pant Mawr, lost or overdue, club, other,*  
Party (3m) mis-judged time taken to reach the cave entrance on a hot afternoon and then spent too long underground.
- 23. Thursday 7 August by DevonCRO at 16.00 (3.00 hours)**  
*Bakers Pit, Buckfastleigh, medical emergency, adventure training,*  
A member of an organised party (f14) pulled a muscle in her back some 150m from the entrance. Stretchered out to awaiting ambulance. Previous back problems had not been notified to leader.
- 24. Saturday 9 August by SWCROWB at 13.00 (11.00 hours)**  
*caves and mines in Brynamr, assist police, non-caver,*  
Assisted police to searching caves, mines and quarry workings for missing man (64). Stood down on Sunday after completing requirements.
- 25. Wednesday 20 August by UWFRA at 16.00 (2.00 hours)**  
*Cherry Tree Pot, Darnbrook Fell, fall, ,*  
Party of 5 cavers were making their way out of the cave when one (m16) misjudged his footing and one leg became trapped in rift. He was released using a pulley system.
- 26. Thursday 28 August by DerbyCRO at 12.50 (1.35 hours)**  
*Blue John Caverns, Castleton, fall, non-caver,*  
Request from ambulance paramedic to assist with a tourist (m39), who fell and injured his leg near the bottom of a show cave. Fortunately he had recovered sufficiently to allow a rescue to be effected with few difficulties. The casualty weighed 18 stones!
- 27. Sunday 31 August by MRO at 13.00 (2.15 hours)**  
*Swildons Hole, flooding, scout,*  
MRO wardens advised of "parties in difficulty" below the 20ft pitch. Another warden passing by came upon a group of scouts just leaving the cave; one of these (f15) showed signs of hypothermia and was treated. The party was found near the old 40ft pitch on their way out. They were not in no obvious difficulty but were unsure of the way out.
- 28. Sunday 31 August by GCRG at 20.20 (5.00 hours)**  
*Otter Hole, flooding, club, affiliated,*  
Party of 4 cavers returning found the tidal sump had not opened. Heavy rainfall contributed to this. Party made their own way out when the sump dropped some 6-7 hours later. The entrance sump can be unpredictable in wet weather.
- 29. Saturday 13 September by CRO at 18.26 (3.15 hours)**

(affiliated clubs based on NCA Members List dated 29-06-1997)

<b>CRO</b>	<i>Cave Rescue Organisation</i>
<b>CMRU</b>	<i>Cornwall Mineshaft Rescue Unit</i>
<b>CMRU</b>	<i>Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit</i>
<b>DerbyCRO</b>	<i>Derbyshire Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>DevonCRO</b>	<i>Devon Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>GCRG</b>	<i>Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Grp</i>
<b>ICRO</b>	<i>Irish Cave Rescue Organisation</i>
<b>MRO</b>	<i>Mendip Rescue Organization</i>

- Bull Pot, Kingsdale, exposure/exhausted, individuals,*  
Caver (m43) exhausted after having difficulty in climbing the fifth pitch of the pothole. Hauled out in harness. Water conditions well above normal.
- 30. Tuesday 30 September by DerbyCRO at 13.50 (2.55 hours)**  
*dig in Ashwood Dale, assist police, ,*  
Man walking dog noticed entrance to camouflaged hole and reported his suspicions to police. It proved to be a caver's dig on land where they did not have permission.
- 31. Friday 17 October by MRO at 23.40 (2.15 hours)**  
*Dallimores Cave, physically stuck, not known,*  
Responded to report that a caver was stuck and required assistance. He was released some 20 minutes after the team arrived his location and surfaced shortly afterwards. Initial callout was routed to the coastguard, then onto Derbyshire CRO whence it was passed to MRO.
- 32. Saturday 1 November by CRO at 18.10 (5.00 hours)**  
*Nick Pot, rock fall, club affiliated,*  
A caver accidentally knocked off a rock flake when descending the 70m bottom pitch. This fell about 60m and shattered on hitting the floor; a fragment of this hit another caver (m25) causing head injuries. After initial casualty care was hauled out in a harness.
- 33. Sunday 9 November by CRO at 16.15 (1.00 hours)**  
*Yordas Pot, Kingsdale, medical emergency, individuals,*  
Man (m55) caving with his son suffered an asthma attack at the bottom of the 24m entrance pitch. He was unable to prusik out or continue along wet crawl because of cold water, and had lost his inhaler. Recovered after treatment and hauled out.
- 34. Monday 10 November by NWCRO at 03.00 (7.00 hours)**  
**Also South Snowdonia S.A.R.T.**  
*Slate Mines, Cwm Croesor Quarry, self marooning, individuals,*  
Cavers (2m, 40s) on route through slate mine from Cwm Croesor to Rhonydd did not have the correct equipment for the route and became stranded at the bottom of an abseil, unable to proceed or return.
- 35. Sunday 16 November by MRO at 14.23 (1.30 hours)**  
*Swildons Hole, exposure/exhausted, scout,*  
Caver (f14) reported suffering badly from exposure. Casualty located and rewarmed with Little Dragon and other comforts. Evacuated to awaiting ambulance.
- 36. Sunday 30 November by MRO at 03.00 (0.30 hours)**  
*Eastwater Swallet, lost or overdue, ,*  
Party of 5 reported overdue. The father of one made the report in Southampton, which was routed to mid-Wales CRO and finally to the MRO. Missing party quickly found in the Upper Traverse making their way out.

<b>MCRO</b>	<i>Midlands Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>NWCRO</b>	<i>North Wales Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>SCRO</b>	<i>Scottish Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>SECRO</b>	<i>South East Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>SWCRO</b>	<i>South Wales Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>SFRO</b>	<i>Swaledale Fell Rescue Org</i>
<b>UWFRA</b>	<i>Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Ass</i>
<b>WCRMG</b>	<i>West Cornwall Mines Rescue Gr</i>