

# British Cave Rescue Council

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR CAVE RESCUE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

## Incident Report for Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 1998

	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	15	-	-	5	1	-	1	6	-	-	1	-	9	-	3	-	-	41
Persons Assisted	27	-	-	7	1	-	8	1	-	-	4	-	16	-	6	-	-	70
Fatalities	0	-	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	-	1
Persons Injured <sup>(2)</sup>	5	-	-	1	1	-	0	2	-	-	0	-	2	-	0	-	-	11
Helicopter assistance <sup>(3)</sup>	1(1)	-	-	0	1	-	0	0	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-	2
Animal Incidents	8	-	-	0	0	-	2	0	-	-	0	-	1	-	2	-	-	13
Assistance to other teams	1	-	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-	1
<b>Totals Underground Incidents</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>54</b>
Surface Incidents	35	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	x	20	-	-	61
Persons Assisted	53	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	1	x	14	-	-	68
Fatalities	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	x	1	-	-	4
Persons Injured	18	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	x	13	-	-	31
Surface Animal Incidents	1	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	x	2	-	-	3
Assistance to other teams	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	x	0	-	-	0
<b>Totals Surface Incidents</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>64</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.
- (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) At the time of publication, the figures for surface incidents from the Swaledale Fell Rescue Organisation were unavailable.

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 EMail PeteAllwright@compuserve.com

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## Summary of Incident Report, 1998

1. There was 1 underground fatality in 1998:
  - a cave diver who drowned; incident 41.
2. Of the 40 underground incidents, 2 involved non-caving activity – incidents 25 and 36
3. The main causes and injuries sustained over recent years are recorded here. The *Injuries Incurred* table includes fatalities and exposure/hypothermia incidents.

**Table 1 : Incident Causes**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
assist police	1	2	2	3		8
cave diving	1				1	2
equipment failure				1		1
exposure/exhausted	6		3	3	6	18
fall	11	9	11	4	5	40
flooding	3	1	1	4	4	13
hung up		1	1		2	4
light failure			1			1
lost or overdue	12	13	8	9	15	57
medical emergency	4	3	2	2	4	15
missing person	3	3	2		1	9
other	2	2	4	2	1	11
physically stuck	3	4	2	3		12
rock fall	2	4	2	2	1	11
self marooning				3	1	4
unable to climb		3				3
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>209</b>

**Table 2: Injuries Incurred**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
arm lower/wrist	1	3			1	5
arm/humerous shoulder	1	4	2			7
Chest Injuries		1	1		2	4
Drowned	2	3			1	6
Exhaustion/hypothermia	4	3	1	2	9	19
femur - pelvic injuries	1	1	1	1		4
Head Injuries	2	1	2	1	1	7
knee injury					2	2
leg - lower/ankle	5	1	3	1	2	12
Medical condition	1	2	1	1	2	7
Multiple Serious	2	2	1	2		7
Spine/back injuries	4		1	2	1	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>88</b>

4. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
5. The underground animal incidents included 1 cow, 3 calves, 4 sheep, 2 lambs and 2 dogs.
6. 'Surface Incidents' include fell/moorland rescues and searches. Teams, chiefly although not exclusively 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 1998.
7. Attendance of rescue personnel was recorded in 32 of the incidents. These involved an average of some 170 man-hours of effort and 21 personnel at an incident. These figures do not include resulting equipment maintenance and re-equipping of rescue vehicles. In this report, incidents are recorded where personnel have been deployed to the site; other problems or alerts are not included.
8. The following table provides the age profile of the casualties involved where they have been reported:

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
5-9	1				1										2
10-14	2	2			2	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	1		20
15-19	5	5	9	5	7	11	8	9	12	5	2	4	6	4	92
20-24	14	12	13	13	15	11	15	4	14	10	5	3	2	14	145
25-29	7	11	9	4	6	7	4	5	11	10	2	7	5	6	94
30-34	2		2	5	6	3	9	7	6	3	2	4	4	5	58
35-39	3	2	2	3		5	1	2	1	3	2	3	3		30
40-44		3	1	1	4	2		1	3	2	1		7	1	26
45-49				1	2			2	2	1		2	1	4	15
50-54		2	1			2			1	1	1	1		1	10
55-59	1									2	1		1		5
60-64							1						1		2
70-74														1	1
75+												1			1

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## Summary of Incidents for 1998

### 1. Friday 2 January by DerbyCRO at 16.40 (for 2¼ hours)

*Rowter Hole, Castleton, hung up, individuals,*  
Caver (f28) got into difficulties trying to pass re-belay at about 45 metres down 60 metre entrance pitch. Two extra ropes put onto pitch and two team members abseiled down. After resolving the re-belay problem the caver was able to make her own way out escorted by the two team members.

### 2. Sunday 18 January by DerbyCRO at 20.15 (for 18 hours)

*Peak Cavern, Castleton, flooding, club (affil'd),*  
Heavy rain caused part of entrance to flood to roof. Situation exacerbated by high groundwater levels. Well equipped party (4m, 24, 23, 22, 22) entered cave at 10 am on the 18th for a long trip to the White River Series. Returned to end of show cave to meet river and then deep water a few metres on. Retreated to the Treasury to wait for water to drop. DCRO tried to reach the party via a new shaft entrance to the Five Arches but found the way on was sumped. Water levels then monitored overnight. Again the shaft was used to gain access and the party located at the Treasury. They were re-warmed and escorted out of the cave when the show cave entrance water level dropped sufficiently.

### 3. Saturday 31 January by SWCRO/WB at 20.30 (for 8½ hours)

*Pant Mawr Pot, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Member of party (m49) left to return alone after coming out of cave late at about 17:30, whilst rest of party went to stop a rescue callout. He became disorientated, possibly due to exhaustion and became lost. His party made a search but a rescue callout was initiated at 20:30. The tracks to Pant Mawr were checked with negative results. Mountain rescue teams called out at 23:00 and a more extensive search made. The caver eventually made his way to the road at Henrhyd Falls Café at 03:15 and the search was stood down.

### 4. Saturday 7 February by SWCRO/WB at 20.11 (for 1 hours)

*OFD II - Cwm Dwr, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party (4m) reported overdue. Search initiated and party located in Cwm Dwr quarry very quickly.

### 5. Sunday 22 February by CRO at 15.55 (for 2 hours)

*Ireby Fell Cavern, fall, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (m22) abseiled off end of rope on the 3rd pitch and fell about 4 metres suffering serious ankle injuries. He landed at the feet of two CRO members, one of whom was a doctor! The casualty was given immediate treatment and was assisted, 'hopping', to the surface where other CRO members carried him to the awaiting ambulance.

### 6. Sunday 1 March by CRO at 01.50 (for 6 hours)

*Southercales Pot, Chapel-le-dale, hung up, individuals,*  
Caver (m34) became exhausted and hung up in water on 2nd pitch resulting in hypothermia; he was lowered to the bottom of the pitch by a companion. First CRO party at scene found second caver (m30), who stayed at scene, in a mildly hypothermic state and he was quickly escorted to the surface. First caver was now unconscious and was in a state of profound hypothermia. He was stretchered to the surface with some difficulty, and evacuated to hospital by RAF helicopter, where his core temperature was measured at 26 deg C. He remained in

intensive care for 24 hours and was discharged 4 days later after making a good recovery.

### 7. Sunday 8 March by DerbyCRO at 17.30 (for 1 hour)

*Odin Mine, Castleton, lost or overdue, individuals,*  
Two cavers (both m) reported overdue. Trip had taken longer than expected and the rescue party, investigating a rather vague report, met the cavers at the entrance.

### 8. Saturday 21 March by MRO at 17.55 (for 4.20 hours)

*Swildons Hole, medical emergency, not known,*  
Caver (m50) reported as suffering an asthma attack near the Double Pots. When MRO arrived it appeared the problem was one of an inhaler not working and help was despatched. The caver was found at Barnes Loop, where it was found the inhaler was working but was not helping the casualty. Further assistance was requested and a doctor summoned to the scene. Once stabilised the casualty was moved carefully to the surface

### 9. Saturday 21 March by SWCRO/WB at 19.45 (for 0.40 hours)

*OFD II, exposure/exhausted, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (m18) collapsed near entrance after through trip. He responded well to re-warming and food and was escorted out.

### 10. Tuesday 24 March by MRO at 18.25 (for ¼ hour)

*Eastwater Swallet, lost or overdue, not known,*  
Request to search for party who were one hour overdue. When informant was contacted, the party had surfaced unharmed.

### 11. Sunday 29 March by SWCRO/GW at 15.10 (for 18 hours)

*Carno Adit, fall, club (affil'd),*  
Whilst climbing a 3 metre aven in the Brickyard, caver (m40) fell and landed against a rock fracturing ribs near the spine. He was treated with pain killers and was able to negotiate much of the way out himself with aid. The rescue would have been greatly prolonged if this had not been the case. Assisted by West Brecon team.

### 12. Saturday 4 April by CRO at 17.05 (for 1¼ hours)

*Lower Long Churn, Alum Pot, exposure/exhausted, individuals,*  
Caver (f26) cold and exhausted at bottom of first 14 metre pitch and unable to climb out. Hauled up by CRO members living locally and escorted to the surface.

### 13. Monday 6 April by CRO at 13.10 (for 2½ hours)

*Lancaster Hole, Casterton Fell, rock fall, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (m49) injured by falling boulders in side passage at Fall Pot. Boulders hit two cavers but one with badly bruised and swollen knee managed to reach surface and raise alarm. The other caver was assisted by the rest of the party to the bottom of the entrance 32 metre shaft, where he was hauled out by CRO personnel and stretchered to the awaiting ambulance. Medical checks revealed no fractures and he was discharged.

### 14. Sunday 12 April by ICRO at 21.00 (for 9 hours)

*Pollnagollum, Co Clare, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party of cavers (7m, 1f, ages 19-27) reported overdue. Found and assisted to surface after extensive search. Assisted by Cliff Rescue (Irish Marine Emergency Services) in hauling out of Poll Elva pot.

### 15. Saturday 25 April by MRO at 03.25 (for ½ hour)

*Swildons Hole, lost or overdue, ,*  
Party of 3 cavers doing a through trip from Priddy Green Sink were reported overdue by three hours. They were

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- located on Priddy Green safe and well having underestimated the time for the trip.
- 16. Sunday 3 May by SWCRO/WB at 17.45 (for 2½ hours)**  
*OFD II, other, club (affil'd),*  
Caver suffered a broken finger in cave and was assisted to surface after first aid treatment.
- 17. Saturday 9 May by CRO at 16.57 (for 2½ hours)**  
*Lancaster Hole, Casterton Fell, medical emergency, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (f20) dislocated kneecap in a slip while twisting around rock below Fall Pot. A physiotherapist in the party 'put the kneecap back' and her friends got her to the bottom of the entrance pitch, where she was hauled up by CRO personnel and evacuated to the awaiting ambulance.
- 18. Sunday 10 May by MRO at 11.35 (for 0.40 hours)**  
*Swildons Hole, fall, ,*  
Caver (f20) fell 'somewhere in Swildons'. Informant could give no further information. Two cavers from party arrived on surface and gave the location as the Water Chamber. Casualty was assisted to surface by other members of her party where they met the MRO team at the entrance. Casualty assisted back to ambulance when minor head wound was treated.
- 19. Monday 25 May by CRO at 19.05 (for 1¼ hours)**  
*Lower Long Churn, lost or overdue, individuals,*  
Group of cavers (m35, m, 2f) reported overdue. Alum Pot Lane checked and enquiries made at cave with negative results. It was later determined their car had broken down on the way to the phone.
- 20. Saturday 30 May by CRO at 17.48 (for 2¼ hours)**  
*Vespers Pot, Kingsdale, medical emergency, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (m20) twisted knee in the entrance crawl. He was able to make his own way back to the entrance where he met the CRO party. He was carried off to the awaiting ambulance at Braida Garth.
- 21. Monday 1 June by UWFRA at 23.45 (for 9 hours)**  
*Dowbergill Passage, Kettlewell, exposure/exhausted, individuals,*  
Caver (f23) became exhausted on trip from Providence Pot to Dow Cave near the Narrows. She was unable to help herself in any way resulting in a protracted rescue. Assisted by CRO.
- 22. Tuesday 16 June by CRO at 17.45 (for 1 hours)**  
*Hurnell Moss Pot, lost or overdue, ,*  
Party reported overdue. Turned up safe and well during preliminary investigation.
- 23. Sunday 21 June by CRO at 23.40 (for ¾ hours)**  
*Stream Passage Pot, lost or overdue, ,*  
Two cavers (m53, f20) reported overdue. They were found in the car park at Clapham during preliminary investigations.
- 24. Sunday 19 July by CRO at 16.10 (for 7 hours)**  
*Diccan Pot, flooding, club (affil'd),*  
Pot flooded after heavy rain showers during afternoon. Two cavers were marooned. Third member of party escaped to raise alarm. Lead CRO party found caver (f29) near the top of the first 35 metre pitch attached by her cowstail to the rope and in the full force of the water. She was semi-conscious. After being hauled up the pitch, she was quickly ferried out of the cave in rising water and taken to hospital. Second caver (m32) remained at the bottom of the first pitch. Five fire appliances provided pumps that helped reduce the water levels. The caver was able to prusik out during a respite in the weather.
- 25. Sunday 2 August by DerbyCRO at 13.25 (for 1½ hours)**  
*Blue John Cavern, Castleton, medical emergency, non-caving incident,*  
Called to assist in the evacuation of tourist (f70) suffering chest pains in lower reaches of show cave. She was stretchered up the many steps to the surface and to the awaiting ambulance.
- 26. Saturday 22 August by SWCRO/WB at 22.30 (for ½ hour)**  
*OFD II, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party of 4 cavers (all m) reported overdue - turned up as search team prepared to depart for cave.
- 27. Wednesday 9 September by DerbyCRO at 16.10 (for 1.40 hours)**  
*P8, Castleton, exposure/exhausted, individuals,*  
Party of two went to first pitch. On way back, stream level rose and one member (f48) was unable to climb Idiots Leap. Her wellies were washed off and swilled away. Help was summoned through a third member of group on surface. The entrance was lined with a polythene sheet and the casualty was extracted to awaiting ambulance suffering mild hypothermia.
- 28. Saturday 26 September by UWFRA at 19.00 (for 8 hours)**  
*Dow Cave, Kettlewell, exposure/exhausted, club (affil'd),*  
Whilst traversing from Providence Pot to Dow Cave via Dowbergill Passage, caver (m25) became exhausted. He was assisted to the surface suffering mild hypothermia.
- 29. Monday 12 October by CRO at 02.00 (for 7 hours)**  
*Turbary Pot, Kingsdale, self marooning, individuals,*  
Cavers (m32, f32) intending a pull-through trip of Swinsto descended Turbary Pot by mistake and pulled rope down, thus becoming marooned. After a search of both Simpsons (including Bobs Pit) and Swinsto with negative results, Rowten Pot was checked but there was no equipment found. The two cavers were then located at 05:15 in Turbary Pot. The second caver (f) had taken 'a considerable amount of pills' for her abdominal pains and but had lost her medication for another condition. A further supply of medication was obtained via the police before she was hauled out.
- 30. Thursday 15 October by DevonCRO at 11.00 (for 4 hours)**  
*Pridhamsleigh Cavern, Buckfastleigh, fall, adventure training,*  
Girl (f18) slipped near the Coalhole and sustained suspected injuries to spine. She was placed in a stretcher supplied by ambulance personnel, and two paramedics attended scene. The casualty was then slowly evacuated to awaiting helicopter and onward to hospital.
- 31. Thursday 22 October by SWCRO/GW at 20.15**  
*Darren Cilau, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party of 3 cavers (all m) had given a rather vague return time of 16:00 and when they had not returned by 20:45 the wife of one called the police and a search set in motion. The cavers were in the cottage at Whitewalls having surfaced at 19:30. The search was stood down.

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**32. Saturday 24 October by ScotCRO at 18.00 (for 9 hours)**

*Uahm An Claonaite, Sutherland, flooding, club (affil'd),*  
Four cavers trapped beyond a sumped duck in UC2 following heavy rain on saturated ground. Initial contact by divers at 19:00 realised after passing a dangerous, sumped duck with fast flowing water. Support of hot food and drink maintained until water levels fell enough for party to be transported through the sumped duck by use of diving gear (two of the four had no previous diving experience). Escorted from cave without further incident.

**33. Sunday 1 November by CRO at 16.10 (for 3 hours)**

*Bull Pot of the Witches, fall, individuals,*  
Caver (f24) slipped and fell about 4m while free climbing the 2nd pitch, sustaining suspected fractured ankle. Assisted and carried to surface.

**34. Sunday 1 November by CRO at 23.00 (for 6¼ hours)**

*Lancaster Hole/County Pot, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party of 5 cavers (m50, m44, m35, m34, m21) reported overdue. Found at the Minarets and escorted out.

**35. Saturday 14 November by MRO at 23.15 (for ¼ hour)**

*Eastwater Swallet, lost or overdue, ,*  
MRO was contacted regarding a car parked at farm for over 9 hours. As the police checked the car details a call was received reporting a party of two were overdue. Meanwhile, the two cavers emerged at the farm having underestimated their trip.

**36. Sunday 15 November by UWFRA at 20.00 (for 5 hours)**

*Dow Cave/Dowbergill Passage, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Party of 4 cavers (m40, 3m) became lost after one member of party 'allegedly knew the way'. Alarm raised and party found and escorted to surface tired and exhausted.

**37. Tuesday 17 November by MRO at 18.15 (for 4¼ hours)**

*Blackdown/Rowberrow, missing person, non-caving incident,*  
MRO were requested to join search for a missing person in the Burrington area. A surface search between cave entrances was made, and the caves themselves were searched for a short distance inside. No trace of missing person was found.

**38. Sunday 22 November by CRO at 13.55 (for 9 hours)**

*Diccan Pot, flooding, club (affil'd),*  
Caver reported trapped in rising waters during flooding. Advance CRO party (4m) entered cave but also became trapped between entrance and the 1st pitch. Dams were built and fire pumps were used to lower the water levels. The CRO party made their own way out after 3 hours. The missing caver was located at the bottom of the 2nd pitch at about 21:00 and was assisted and hauled to the surface.

**39. Sunday 22 November by CRO at 18.15 (for 2 hours)**

*Stream Passage Pot, exposure/exhausted, club (affil'd),*  
Caver (m26) exhausted and hung-up in the wet entrance pitch unable to climb out. His companion cut the rope and the caver fell a short distance to the bottom of the pitch. He was hauled out by CRO personnel diverted from the Diccan incident. He was assisted to road-head.

**40. Sunday 6 December by SWCRO/GW at 18.00 (for 1 hours)**

*Ogof Craif a Ffynnon, lost or overdue, club (affil'd),*  
Confusion over which was the last of four parties to leave the cave resulted in two cavers (both m) being left inside. Key for the gate was found and they were released.

**41. Wednesday 30 December by SWCRO/WB at 16.40 (for 18 hours)**

*Ogof Pont Yr Meirw, cave diving, club (affil'd),*  
Cave diver (m45) drowned on returning from exploring beyond the first sump. Recovery of the body through the constricted entrance proved very difficult, necessitating the widening of parts of the passage. Assisted by the Fire Brigade and the Mines Rescue.

Quick Summary	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Underground Caving Incidents	47	73	57	39	46	53	47	45	38	36	40
No. persons	123	184	153	87	104	129	111	109	64	61	70
No. of fatalities	4	1	3	2	2	2	5	5	1	1	0
No. injured	14	19	14	10	12	16	20	13	13	7	11
Divers assisted incidents			2		2	1		1			2
and add:											
Cave diving incidents	1	3	1		1		1				1
No persons	1	3	1		1		1				1
Diving fatalities	1	0	0		1		1				1

(affiliated clubs based on NCA Members List dated 13 December 1998)

<b>CRO</b>	<i>Cave Rescue Organisation</i>	<b>MCRO</b>	<i>Midlands Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>CMRU</b>	<i>Cornwall Mineshaft Rescue Unit</i>	<b>NWCRO</b>	<i>North Wales Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>COMRU</b>	<i>Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit</i>	<b>ScotCRO</b>	<i>Scottish Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>DerbyCRO</b>	<i>Derbyshire Cave Rescue Org</i>	<b>SECRO</b>	<i>South East Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>DevonCRO</b>	<i>Devon Cave Rescue Org</i>	<b>SWCRO</b>	<i>South Wales Cave Rescue Org</i>
<b>GCRG</b>	<i>Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Grp</i>	<b>SFRO</b>	<i>Swaledale Fell Rescue Org</i>
<b>ICRO</b>	<i>Irish Cave Rescue Organisation</i>	<b>UWFRA</b>	<i>Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Ass</i>
<b>MRO</b>	<i>Mendip Rescue Organization</i>	<b>WCRMG</b>	<i>West Cornwall Mines Rescue Grp</i>