

# British Cave Rescue Council

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR CAVE RESCUE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

## Incident Report for Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2000

	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
<b>Caving Incidents</b>	12	-	2	4 <sup>(4)</sup>	-	2	1	5	2 <sup>(4)</sup>	1	-	1	4	-	1	-	-	34
<b>Persons Assisted</b>	23	-	2	6	-	1	1	12	0	3	-	1	9	-	2	-	-	60
<b>Fatalities</b>	1	-	0	0	-	0	0	0	1	0	-	0	0	-	0	-	-	2
<b>Persons Injured<sup>(2)</sup></b>	2	-	1	0	-	1	1	0	0	3	-	2	2	-	0	-	-	12
<b>Helicopter assistance<sup>(3)</sup></b>	2(2)	-	2(2)	1	-	0	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	-	-	5
<b>Animal Incidents</b>	6	-	1	0	-	1	0	0	0	0	-	0	1	-	2	1	-	12
<b>Assistance to other teams</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	- <sup>(4)</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Totals Underground Incidents</b>	18	-	3	4	-	3	1	5	2	1	-	1	5	-	3	1	-	46
<b>Surface Incidents</b>	31 <sup>(5)</sup>	-	-	1 <sup>(6)</sup>	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	15	10 <sup>(5)</sup>	-	x	59
<b>Persons Assisted</b>	57	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	39	12	-	x	110
<b>Fatalities</b>	3 <sup>(5)</sup>	-	-	-	-	1	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	2	5 <sup>(5)</sup>	-	x	9
<b>Persons Injured</b>	20	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	14	5	-	x	39
<b>Surface Animal Incidents</b>	3	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	-	x	5
<b>Assistance to other teams</b>	3	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	-	x	5
<b>Totals Surface Incidents</b>	37	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	19	10	-	-	69

### 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. Derbyshire Cave Rescue and Midland Cave Rescue were called to an incident in Dudley Mines, see incident 9.
5. CRO was called when two schoolgirls were swept away in flood conditions at Stainforth in North Yorkshire. UWFRA were called in to assist this difficult rescue. Members of the Cave Diving Group (CDG) were also called in. This rescue involved many other services.
6. Derbyshire CRO was asked by Derbyshire police to assist in the search for a missing person in a quarry near Matlock. The body was, however, found before DCRO arrived. The team did a search for forensic evidence on behalf of the police.

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, 2000

- There was one underground caving fatality in 2000:
  - A caver drowned in flood conditions, see incident 31
- Of the 34 underground incidents, teams undertook 4 incidents assisting the police in the execution of their duty – incidents 9, 14, 23 and 34. Of these, 2 involved fatalities – incidents 23 and 34.
- 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**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
assist police	2	3		7	2	14
cave diving			1			1
equipment failure		1				1
exposure/exhausted	3	3	6	2	4	18
fall	11	4	5	4	4	28
flooding	1	4	4	2	3	14
hung up	1		2			3
light failure	1				1	2
lost or overdue	8	9	15	11	8	51
medical emergency	2	2	4	2	2	12
missing person	2		1	1	2	6
other	4	2	1	1		8
physically stuck	2	3		1	5	11
rock fall	2	2	1	3	2	10
self marooning		3	1	1		5
unable to climb				1	1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>186</b>

**Table 2: Injuries Incurred**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
arm lower/wrist			1		2	3
arm/humerous shoulder	2			1		3
Chest Injuries	1		2		2	5
Drowned			1		1	2
Exhaustion/hypothermia	1	2	9	1	5	20
femur - pelvic injuries	1	1		1		3
Head Injuries	2	1	1		1	5
Knee Injuries			2	2	1	3
leg - lower/ankle	3	1	2	1	3	7
Medical condition	1	1	2	1	1	6
Multiple Serious	1	2				3
Spine/back injuries	1	2	1		2	6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>68</b>

- The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
- The underground animal incidents included 1 calf, 5 lambs and 6 dogs. ‘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 2000.
- Attendance of rescue personnel was recorded in 33 (30, 32) of the incidents. These involved an average of some 88¼ (48½, 170) man-hours of effort and 15 (12, 21) personnel at an incident. (Figures in brackets are for 1999 and 1998 respectively.) 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.
- The following table provides the age profile of the casualties involved *where they have been reported*:

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
10-14	1	2	2	2	1	2	1				11
15-20	8	9	12	5	2	4	6	3	2	2	53
20-24	15	4	14	10	5	3	2	14	12	5	84
25-29	4	5	11	10	2	7	5	6	1	2	53
30-34	9	7	6	3	2	4	4	5	5	4	49
35-39	1	2	1	3	2	3	3		1	1	17
40-44		1	3	2	1		7	2	3	5	24
45-49		2	2	1		2	1	4	5	2	19
50-54			1	1	1	1		1	2	3	10
55-59				2	1		1				4
60-64	1						1		1		3
65-69										1	1
70-74								1	2		3
75-79						1					1

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## Summary of Incidents for 2000

- 1. Sunday 2 January by CRO at 18:13 (for ¼ hour)**  
*Rumbling Hole, lost or overdue, not known*  
Cavers (2m) reported overdue. Were found by lead CRO party returning across the moor.
- 2. Monday 3 January by MRO at 13:00 (for ¼ hour)**  
*Thrupe Lane Swallet, flooding, individuals,*  
Person reported trapped by flood waters. Whilst measures were being taken to divert water, caver (m) returned to the surface having sat out the worst of the flood and made his way to the surface as soon as the route was practical.
- 3. Sunday 9 January by SWCRO at 18:00 (for ½ hour)**  
*Ogof Gwynnt yr Eira, lost or overdue, club*  
Party overdue from digging and diving trip. A team member was dispatched to check for vehicle still at cave. Missing cavers arrived back at 18:50 and team was stood down -mix up over callout time.
- 4. Thursday 20 January by MRO at 19:00 (for 1 hour)**  
*Swidlons Hole, lost or overdue, shool*  
Leader of a party became separated from his party (5m) somewhere in the region of Jacobs Ladder. He had last seen them heading in the direction of Baptistery Crawl and into Showerbath Chamber. He had been unable to follow, and when he failed to make contact with them above Jacobs Ladder he made a quick search of the Wet Way. MRO deployed a search party to the upper reaches of the cave. This party met the group on the way to the cave.
- 5. Saturday 5 February by UWFRA at 21:30 (for 6½ hours)**  
*Dowbergill Passage, lost or overdue, not known*  
Two cavers (m36,m29) failed to find way through Dowbergill Passage from Providence to Dow Cave. Eventually found and escorted out.
- 6. Wednesday 16 February by GCRG at 13:40 (for 2 hours)**  
*C10, Symonds Yat, medical emergency, adventure training*  
Member of youth group (m) suffered slipped disc in cave. Fire and Rescue called by 999 operator - cave rescue called some 30 minutes later. F&R and a paramedic went underground and casualty was assisted to surface and taken to road head at river level for evacuation to hospital.
- 7. Wednesday 8 March by SECRO at 00:03 (for 2 hours)**  
*Bedlams Bank Quarry, Surrey, lost or overdue, club*  
Two cavers (2m30s) became lost in the western section of the old stone quarries leading to "The Groutings" (contains 10 miles of similar looking passage).The leader had previously been to this area three times. Their ladder down the entrance shaft had also been disconnected and dropped down the entrance shaft!
- 8. Thursday 30 March by DerbyCRO at 16:10 (for 2:08 hours)**  
*P8, Castleton, exposure/exhausted, club*  
Caver (m52) became exhausted and was unable to climb first 8 metre pitch. Companion did not have equipment to help him up. Straight forward rescue complicated by attendance of large numbers of fire service personnel and breakdown of surface communications.
- 9. Sunday 2 April by DerbyCRO and MidlandCRO at 18:45 (for 3¾ hours)**  
*Seven Sisters Cave, Dudley, assist police*  
Warden observed 6 people entering the mine, but saw only 2 returning. Alarm was raised and DCRO were asked to investigate. A joint effort between DCRO/MCRO and the police established the missing youths were drunk or drugged, and were not approachable. Rescue operation was called off.
- 10. Monday 3 April by CRO at 22:18 (for 3½ hours)**  
*Gaping Ghyll, exposure/exhausted*  
Different groups of cavers entered system via Flood Entrance, by Stream Passage Pot, or by Dihedral shaft. Shortly after leaving Main Chamber, caver (m22) became exhausted. He was assisted/hailed to the surface via Bar Pot.
- 11. Saturday 22 April by CRO at 10:35 (for 3 hours)**  
*Sell Gill Hole, fall, scout*  
Caver (f52) on first descent of SRT rope suffered an uncontrolled descent of about 10 metres on the second pitch, suffering compression fractures to the spine and severe bruising. Evacuated to surface and by RAF helicopter to hospital.
- 12. Wednesday 3 May by SWCRO at 18:51 (for 3:03 hours)**  
*OFD Top Entrance, medical emergency, club*  
Caver dislocated kneecap in the Shatter Pillar area of the cave. Assistance was called. Meanwhile the caver (f23) started to make her way out of the cave with assistance. Was met by rescue team just after Edwards Short Cut. Casualty was then carried in stretcher to surface. A smooth and fast rescue was effected through the self-help effected by the casualty and her party.
- 13. Monday 8 May by MRO at 22:00 (for 3 hours)**  
*Rhino Rift, lost or overdue, not known*  
A trip ticket for a group visiting Rhino Rift was found on the board at the Belfy. There was concern that a party of 4 had been down the cave since the previous day. The missing party's car was located at the farm, but on checking with the farmer, it transpired they had only entered the cave mid-morning that day. They were expected to be on a long trip. Later that day, the farmer raised the alarm when the cavers failed to surface. It was decided to wait until midnight before instigating action. When MRO arrived at the farm at 01:00, the car had gone- they had missed the group by minutes.
- 14. Wednesday 10 May by COMRU at 16:30 (for 5½ hours)**  
*Honister Slate Quarry, Cumbria, missing person, non-caver*  
Called to assist police/mountain rescue in search for missing man (63) in Honister Hause and Yew Crag Quarries.Nothing found. (Man was reported near Keswick at time of rescue.)
- 15. Sunday 28 May by CRO at 14:40 (for 6 hours)**  
*Stream Passage Pot, fall, club*  
Caver (m43) lost control on abseil while resting at a deviation on the 3rd pitch and fell some 5 metres, suffering a fractured rib and severe bruising. He was lowered down to Sand Caverns and evacuated to Main Chamber, where he was lifted out on the Bradford Pothole Club winch. Assisted by Bradford Pothole Club members.
- 16. Saturday 10 June by COMRU at 13:00 (for 8 hours)**  
*Smallclough Mine, Nenthead, Cumbria, fall, club*  
Party of 2 entered mine and one (m43) descended Hydraulic Shaft first pitch. Found that ladder was too short. Attempted to climb back through heavy flow of water and lost grip, falling approximately 5 to 7 metres, and landed prone on back, suffering serious spinal injuries and a detached sternum. The alarm was raised by his companion. Local mountain rescue teams called to assist with evacuation up pitch of about 33 metres and approximately 1 kilometre of crawling and stooping levels. Doctor with casualty throughout. Taken to Newcastle General by RAF helicopter. Assisted by Penrith and Patterdale MRTs.
- 17. Thursday 20 July by DerbyCRO at 22:45 (for 1¾ hours)**  
*Jug Holes, Matlock, light failure, individuals*  
2 locals and a visiting friend (m21, m20, m19) entered lower entrance to do through trip, but got lost, when all their penlight torches failed. Quickly found and escorted out.
- 18. Saturday 22 July by CRO at 21:25 (for ½ hour)**  
*Tatham Wife Hole, lost or overdue*  
Party of cavers (3m,f) reported overdue. Were found at their vehicle by initial investigation party.

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- 19. Friday 28 July by DerbyCRO at 23:00 (for 1¼ hours)**  
*Nettle Pot, Casleton, lost or overdue, club*  
Party of 2 experienced cavers (m36, m21) were reported overdue. Met on surface by advance rescue party. The time for callout had been mis-interpreted and rescue was called much too early.
- 20. Tuesday 1 August by CRO at 17:40 (for 1½ hours)**  
*Big Meanie, Leck Fell, physically stuck, individuals*  
Caver (m22) became physically wedged. The weight of tackle bags and other equipment on rope below hindered escape. CRO remover personal gear, then he was assisted out relatively easily.
- 21. Sunday 6 August by CRO at 06:45 (for 10¼ hours)**  
*Gaping Ghyll, physically stuck, individuals*  
Caver (m42) became physically wedged whilst returning through Sahara Passage, and suffered light failure. He was freed by companions but was on 'wrong' side of small passage. Rest of party made their way out on failing lights to raise alarm. Casualty waited for some 8 hours in darkness for CRO teams to arrive. He was escorted out via Eastern Way and Southgate back to Bar Pot, where he was hauled up the pitches.
- 22. Wednesday 16 August by CRO at 14:50 (for 2 hours)**  
*Yordas Pot, unable to climb, individuals*  
Two cavers, (m,f), believed of limited experience, descended Yordas Pot in high water conditions. One (f40) was unable to return up 24 metre pitch. CRO found her very cold and wet. She was quickly hauled to the surface.
- 23. Saturday 19 August by GCRG at 12:00 (for 2:03 hours)**  
*underground sites around Symonds Yat, missing person, non-caving incident*  
Called in by Hereford and Worcester Constabulary to search underground sites in and around Symonds Yat for missing person. Body found at the base of cliffs by the other agencies searching the crags.
- 24. Saturday 19 August by CRO at 23:30 (for 3½ hours)**  
*Gaping Ghyll, flooding, individuals*  
Cavers (m48, m32, m32) passed through the Font and explored the Whitsun Series. Meanwhile, the Font flooded as a result of the prevailing weather conditions. The three were reported as missing and Craven Pothole Club (who were operating the Main Shaft winch) search likely routes before calling CRO. Meanwhile, they bailed the Font and made contact with the missing cavers, and soon they were able to pass through. They were met by the CRO and cave divers, who were making their way into the cave.
- 25. Sunday 20 August by CRO at 12:15 (for 1¼ hours)**  
*Short Gill Cave, Barbondale, physically stuck, not known*  
Caver (m52) became stuck in 5 metre entrance climb. As his companions freed him, a rock fell on his head, inflicting minor head injuries. He was brought to the surface as CRO lead team arrived and was able to walk to road head with assistance. AA air ambulance called but was not used.
- 26. Wednesday 27 September by CRO at 15:03 (for 1½ hours)**  
*dig near Aygill Caverns, Casterton Fell, rock fall, club*  
Caver (m68) trapped by legs in a surface dig after the boulders moved in the entrance. Quickly released by CRO members. He suffered bruising to both legs.
- 27. Saturday 30 September by SWCRO at 16:20 (for 4 hours)**  
*Ogof Pen Eryr, physically stuck, club*  
Caver (m25) failed to negotiate squeeze, leaving a further 5 cavers marooned inside cave. He was released suffering bruised ribs and all returned safely to surface.
- 28. Sunday 1 October by MRO at 12:00 (for ¼ hour)**  
*St Cuthberts Swallet, physically stuck, individuals*  
Report of caver (m) physically stuck in Entrance Rift and could not move. The "baby bouncer" and hauling equipment was requested, and sent underground. The caver had already been freed. There was some concern over possible flooding which brought urgency to the situation.
- 29. Friday 27 October by NWCRO at 19:50 (for 3 hours)**  
*Bwlch y Plwm Mine, Gwynedd, fall, individuals*  
NWCRO were called to support the South Snowdonia and Aberglaslyn MR teams when cavers (1m, 2f) suffered various injuries as a result of abseiling difficulties. The male casualty suffered a broken leg, whilst the two females suffered lower arm injuries.
- 30. Saturday 4 November by SWCRO at 19:00 (for 3 hours)**  
*Pant Mawr Pot, exposure/exhausted, club*  
Caver (m) unable to climb ladder. Casualty hauled up 20 metre shaft and returned to base via team landrover.
- 31. Sunday 12 November by CRO at 14:42**  
*Lancaster Hole, flooding, individuals*  
(10½ hours, 38 persons) Two cavers entered the Main Drain in Lancaster Hole reportedly at Stake Pot. Almost immediately the first caver was washed away by high water. The second caver quickly followed. The latter found slow water at Fall Pot and, although suffering head injuries, was able to make his way out of the cave and up Lancaster Hole to raise the alarm. A search of the Main Drain was greatly hampered by the high-water conditions; the caver could not be found in and around the area of the Main Drain that could be searched.  
**Monday 13th November:** (11¼ hours, 18 persons) A similar search was repeated in rising water conditions. This included a wider search of the high level passages and the through route through to Wretched Rabbit. All were negative.  
**Wednesday 15th November:** (5¼ hours, 6 persons) The Main Drain from Stake Pot to the sump were searched by a small party in lower water conditions. Preparations for a larger search to include divers were made.  
**Sunday 19th November:** (14¼ hours, 39 persons) A planned search of the sump by cave divers was organised, and much diving equipment was ferried into the cave. A search of the Main Drain up from the sump was initiated and the **body** of the first caver was found above Stake Pot, between Oxbow Corner and Stake Pot. It has since been established that the cavers entered the Main Drain at Oxbow Corner.
- 32. Saturday 25 November by ICRO at 12:20 (for 10¼ hours)**  
*Pollbeg Cave, Poll na Gollum, rock fall, club*  
Caver (m) trapped by his left leg in a rock fall. Two cavers stayed with the casualty whilst two other raised alarm. Serious difficulties and delays in raising mountain or cave rescue through the emergency system, and local ICRO warden was contacted directly. On arrival, it was reported a further collapse had occurred whilst attempting to free the caver, and that some of the rescuers were now trapped beyond. A full national callout was instigated. The extrication of the injured caver was difficult and dangerous in restricted conditions, and the cavers injuries meant that time was critical. Caver and others were freed at 22:30 and was examined by a doctor before transport to hospital. Assisted by Doolin Coast Guard, fire service throughout.
- 33. Saturday 2 December by MRO at 18:30 (for 2 hours)**  
*SwildonsHole, exposure/exhausted, scout*  
Caver (f40) unable to climb ladder at the 20ft pitch. Water levels were very high. She was hauled up the pitch and was then able to make her own way out with assistance from the rescue team.
- 34. Sunday 10 December by MCRO at 09:45 (for 5½ hours)**  
*tunnel at Stirchley, Telford, Shropshire, assist police*  
Assist police in location and retrieval of body from tunnel.