

British Cave Rescue Council

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR CAVE RESCUE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2001 - 31st December 2001

	Cave Rescue Organisation	Cornwall Mines Rescue	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	Others ⁽¹⁾	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	6	-	1	2	1	-	-(4)	3	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	18
Persons Assisted	13	-	1	1	1	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	27
Fatalities	2	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	2
Persons Injured⁽²⁾	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	6
Helicopter assistance⁽³⁾	2(2)	-	1(1)	0	0	-	-	1(1)	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	4(4)
Animal Incidents	1	-	2	1	0	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	0	1	-	-	7
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Totals Underground Incidents	7	-	3	3	1	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	25
Surface Incidents	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	9	x	23
Persons Assisted	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	7	x	31
Fatalities	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	3	x	5
Persons Injured	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	x	11
Surface Animal Incidents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	x	1
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	0
Totals Surface Incidents	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	9		24

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.
In the event, the helicopter requested by the MRO was unable to land due to bad weather.
4. ICRO reported a standby incident where 8 show cave guides where reported missing on a trip to Legnabrocky Way, part of the Marble Arch Cave System in Fermanagh, in July. An ICRO warden visited the cave and found no evidence of the missing party. The rescue was stood down when their leader was found at home.

Copies of this report are available from the BCRC Website – www.caverescue.org.uk

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, 2001

1. Caving activity during this year was greatly disrupted throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland by an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. This caused the closure of most caving areas for over six months of the year.
2. There were two underground caving fatalities in 2001:
 - Two cavers drowned in flood conditions, see incident 2
3. Of the 18 underground incidents, teams undertook 3 incidents assisting the police in the execution of their duty – incidents 7, 8 and 14.
4. 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	2001	Total
assist police	2	3		7	2	3	17
cave diving			1				1
equipment failure		1					1
exposure/exhausted	3	3	6	2	4	1	19
fall	11	4	5	4	4	3	31
flooding	1	4	4	2	3	2	16
hung up	1		2				3
light failure	1				1		2
lost or overdue	8	9	15	11	8	2	53
medical emergency	2	2	4	2	2	2	14
missing person	2		1	1	2		6
other	4	2	1	1		2	10
physically stuck	2	3		1	5	1	12
rock fall	2	2	1	3	2	1	11
self marooning		3	1	1		1	6
unable to climb				1	1		2
	39	36	41	36	34	18	204

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
arm lower/wrist			1		2		3
arm/humerous shoulder	2			1		1	4
Chest Injuries	1		2		2	2	7
Drowned			1		1	2	4
Exhaustion/hypothermia	1	2	9	3	5	3	23
femur - pelvic injuries	1	1		1		1	4
Head Injuries	2	1	1		1		5
Knee Injuries	1	1	2		1		5
leg - lower/ankle	2		2		3	1	8
Medical condition	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
Multiple Serious	1	2					3
Spine/back injuries	1	2	1		2		6
	13	10	21	6	18	11	79

5. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
6. The underground animal incidents included 1 calf, 3 sheep, 1 lamb and 3 dogs, one of which had to be rescued twice! '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 2001.
7. Attendance of rescue personnel was recorded in 17 (33, 30, 32) of the incidents. These involved an average of some 168 (88¼, 48½, 170) man-hours of effort and 16 (15, 12, 21) personnel at an incident. (Figures in brackets are for 2000, 1999 and 1998 respectively.) These figures do not include resulting equipment maintenance and re-equipping of rescue vehicles. In this report, incidents are recorded normally where personnel have been deployed to the site; other problems or alerts are not included. Readers should note that the effort required by the Daren Cilau rescue itself was twice the total cumulative effort of the other rescues (Daren approximately 1980 hours whereas the remainder required 876 hours).

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Summary of Incidents for 2001

1. Sunday 4 February by MRO at 14:45 (for 3¼ hours)

Corsham Stone Mine, Wiltshire, other

Concern had been raised regarding the safety of three people who had gone down a mine at Neston near Corsham. Local MRO members were contacted and asked to liaise with the police at the scene. A search of Ridge & Park Lane mines was suggested and progressed.

A backup team from Mendip was put on stand by and to ensure insurance cover was in place the incident was logged with Avon & Somerset constabulary. Wiltshire Police does not provide personal accident cover for voluntary personnel.

The missing party was located approx. 200m inside Ridge Mine. They had decided to camp in the mine for the night and were unwilling to come out. The local police inspector however insisted that they exit immediately.

2. Sunday 11 February by CRO at 10:45 (for 7¼ hours)

Ireby Fell Cavern, flooding

Two cavers (m58, m29) reported overdue to police from a Saturday descent. Their car was eventually found at the waterworks above Masongill, whereupon CRO were called out. A search of caves in the area found tackle on the pitches in Ireby Fell Cavern. The **bodies** of the two cavers were found on the third pitch. A difficult recovery followed. Attempts were made to divert the water on the surface due to persistent heavy rain. A RAF helicopter assisted in the movement of materials to assist the latter operation.

3. Sunday 25 February by SWCRO at 15:15 (for 33 hours)

Daren Cilau, medical emergency

Three experienced cavers were visiting the Blue Greenies in the far reaches of this lengthy cave when one (m48) suffered a dislocated shoulder. It took them 10 hours to return to the Hard Rock Café (HRC) camp where the casualty was made comfortable. The remaining cavers then made their way out of the cave, a trip of some 5 hours, raising the alarm at 15:15. A medical team including a doctor entered the cave at 20:00 and by 03:00 Monday had reached the casualty and the shoulder was reduced.

Communications to surface were established and control advised that the casualty would leave HRC at 05:00 following further rest. He would make his own way with considerable assistance, thus avoiding a stretcher carry that could have taken up to 3 days.

The casualty took some 4 hours to reach the 70ft pitches, where he was hauled up in a harness, from where he made rapid progress to the Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance; here he was rested and feed. A fresh team of rescue personnel then assisted the casualty through the entrance crawl.

The rescue team paid tribute to the casualty's fitness and caving ability that avoided an extended rescue.

SWCRO (Gwent and West Brecon) assisted by members of GCRG.

4. Monday 14 May by MRO at 23:15

Blackmoor Swallet, other

This relatively simple rescue from Stainsbys Shaft created great media interest owing to the nature of the incident and was reported worldwide. A party of school children from the Charterhouse Centre were on a night walk in the vicinity of Blackmoor Swallet when they heard shouts. The whole area was at that time closed to the public owing to the foot & mouth crisis and in theory no one should have been there. Further investigation of the noises indicated that somebody was shouting for help from down the shaft.

The MRO were called and a team was raised and a MRO doctor was asked to attend as it was not known what type of injuries the trapped person may have had. During the previous week concern had been raised for the safety of a man who had been missing for some time. It was thought likely that the casualty could be that missing person which indicated he might have been down the shaft for many days.

The MRO team located the casualty and the doctor examined and stabilised him at the scene. Owing to the possible complications that may arise from the extended period underground combined with hypothermia and dehydration it was decided to lift him from the shaft in a horizontal position on the stretcher. A helicopter was requested from RAF Chivenor for rapid evacuation. Unfortunately deteriorating weather conditions stopped the Sea King landing and the casualty was transported to hospital by ambulance.

5. Sunday 1 July by DerbyCRO at 16:20 (for 2:05 hours)

Suicide Cave, Castleton, fall

Man (m41) whilst exploring stepped wrong way and fell some 15 feet, suffering fractured ribs and other internal injuries. Attended by paramedics from Debyshire Ambulance Service. Lifted up pitch horizontally, followed by careful carry to entrance because of injuries sustained. Assisted by teams from Peak District Mountain Rescue.

6. Tuesday 3 July by COMRU at 22:00 (for 3½ hours)

Smallcleugh Mine, Nenthead, medical emergency

Man (m43) collapsed some way into the mine. Difficulty for doctor in diagnosing problem. Casualty evacuated to surface and then by RAF helicopter to Hexham hospital. Assisted by Penrith MRT.

7. Sunday 5 August by DerbyCRO at 15:30 (for 1½ hours)

Culvert in Buxton, assist police

A pile of clothes were found in car park close to entrance of culverted River Wye. A search was requested by the police but nothing was found.

8. Thursday 23 August by CRO at 21:30 (for ¾ hour)

Gaping Ghyll, assist police

Investigation of potholes around GG was requested by police when a mobile phone was found by the side of Fell Beck. It was feared someone may have fallen down the Main Shaft. Investigation cancelled when the owner of the phone was located by CRO in the New Inn in Clapham.

9. Wednesday 12 September by MRO at 12:20 (for 1 hour)

Goatchurch Cavern, self marooning

A request to assist a party was received in a round about manner to assist a stranded party. Three cavers were located at the bottom of the coal chute. They had been unable to climb out and had become disorientated. They were assisted out of the cave.

10. Wednesday 12 September by CRO at 20:10 (for 6¼ hours)

Meregill Hole, flooding

Cavers (3m,46,42,40) descended the cave but were prevented from returning by a flash flood, which caught them whilst climbing the third pitch. The third caver retreated to safety below the pitch as the force of the water was too great. CRO entered by the Aven Entrance and found two of the cavers, their way out being blocked by the now sumped Mere. They were escorted out.

The third caver was located in the Canyon below the third pitch, where he had waited out the flood. He was cold and wet. The pitches were re-rigged out of the water and he was assisted to the surface.

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11. Sunday 30 September by DevonCRO at 13:00 (for 6 hours)

Bedford United Mine, nr Gunnislake, rock fall

Cavers exploring the mine were caught by a partial collapse of mine/loose debris, resulting in minor lacerations and suspected ribs injuries to one of the party (m). The party succeeded with self-rescue to within 75 metres of entrance. Two of the group (2m) then left the mine to call for help when the casualty became debilitated by his injuries. The fire brigade were first on the scene and, although unaware of the hazards, effected rescue. DCRO then stood down.

12. Thursday 4 October by SWCRO at 17:00 (for 1 hours)

Ogof Clogwyn, physically stuck

Member of instructed party (f) became trapped by the knee in a slot. Callout was made but in the meantime the casualty was freed by companions. The Fire Service had become involved and confused the situation.

13. Saturday 10 November by SWCRO at 16:55 (for 2 hours)

Ogof Fynnon Ddu I-II, exposure/exhausted

Member (f19) of 5 strong caving party on a through trip from OFD I to OFD II became exhausted and party leader decided to return to the surface through Cwm Dwr. One member of party was sent ahead to bring in assistance. Casualty was re-warmed and assisted out through the Cwm Dwr crawl and entrance pitch.

14. Tuesday 20 November by SWCRO at 16:00 (for 5 hours)

Well in Brecon Town Centre, assist police

Search of 35ft deep well in Brecon Town Centre for murder weapon - nothing found. Search delayed some 2 hours whilst police tried in vain to locate key for grid cover lock.

15. Saturday 24 November by SWCRO at 17:30 (for 2 hours)

Ogof Fynnon Ddu II, fall

Caver (m) suffered a bad ankle sprain whilst exploring in OFD II. Rescue called out to give assistance back to surface and transport off the fell.

16. Sunday 16 December by CRO at 21:06 (for 1 hours)

Meregill Hole, lost or overdue

Three cavers were reported overdue, but had arrived back at their vehicles in the layby above the Hill Inn when CRO arrived.

17. Thursday 20 December by CRO at 23:55 (for 1 hours)

Meregill Hole, lost or overdue

4 cavers reported overdue. Found coming over the moor by the first CRO party to arrive.

18. Sunday 30 December by CRO at 18:15 (for 6½ hours)

Pool Sink, fall

Caver (f18) suffered uncontrolled descent of some 3 metres on the 4th pitch. Suspected pelvic injuries (later confirmed) and surrounding bruising. Casualty was able to partly assist herself on the way out through Pool Sink, thus avoiding a lengthy and difficult stretcher carry down the cave then out of County Pot. Evacuated by RAF helicopter (Leconfield).