



# British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

## Incident Report for Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002

	Cave Rescue Organisation <sup>(4)</sup>	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	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	5	-	0	1	1	-	-	3	-	0	-	-	9	-	-	19
Assisting Authorities <sup>(3)</sup>	3	-	2	1	0	-	-	0	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	8
Persons Assisted	11	-	1	1	6	-	-	3	-	0	-	-	19	-	-	41
Fatalities	1	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	1	-	-	2
Persons Injured <sup>(1)</sup>	4	-	0	0	1	-	-	2	-	0	-	-	2	-	-	9
Helicopter assistance <sup>(2)</sup>	2(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2(1)
Animal Incidents	6	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	12
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Totals Underground Incidents</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>39</b>
Surface Incidents	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	25	66
Persons Assisted	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	24	75
Fatalities	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	7
Persons Injured	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	14	43
Surface Animal Incidents	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Totals Surface Incidents</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>71</b>

### Notes:

1. Injuries include those assisted for a medical condition, but exclude cavers assisted through exhaustion.
2. Row records use of helicopter to evacuate casualty, figure in brackets is the number of calls to the RAF included in the total.
3. This row records incidents where assistance is requested by the authorities for non-caver incidents. These are identified on page 2 of this report.
4. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.

**Copies of this report are available from the BCRC Website – [www.caverescue.org.uk](http://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](mailto:PeteAllwright@compuserve.com)



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## Summary of Incident Report, 2002

- There was one underground caving fatality in 2002:
  - A caver drowned whilst swimming through a deep pool to leave a cave – incident 17

A second fatality occurred whilst assisting the authorities:

  - A member of a guided trip in a show cave suffered a heart attack – incident 14
- Rescue teams undertook 8 incidents assisting the authorities (police, ambulance) in the execution of their duty – incidents 2, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 20 and 23.
- 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	2002	Total
assist authorities	2	3			7	2	3	25
cave diving			1					1
equipment failure		1						1
exposure/exhausted	3	3	6	2	4	1	1	20
fall	11	4	5	4	4	3	6	37
flooding	1	4	4	2	3	2	1	17
hung up	1		2					3
light failure	1				1			2
lost or overdue	8	9	15	11	8	2	5	58
medical emergency	2	2	4	2	2	2	1	15
missing person	2		1	1	2			6
other	4	2	1	1		2	2	12
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		3	5
	39	36	41	36	34	18	27	231

**Table 2: Injuries Incurred**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
arm lower/wrist			1		2			3
arm/humerous shoulder	2			1		1	2	6
Chest Injuries	1		2		2	2		9
Drowned			1		1	2	1	5
Exhaustion/hypothermia	1	2	9	3	5	3	1	24
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	2	9
Multiple Serious	1	2						3
Spine/back injuries	1	2	1		2		3	9
	13	10	21	6	18	11	11	90

- Caving activity during 2001 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.
- The underground animal incidents included 1 cow, 1 sheep, 3 lambs and 4 dogs. ICRO report rescuing some 7 goats from a quarry face at Knockninny; some months later 4 more had to be rescued from the same location!
- '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 2002.
- Attendance of rescue personnel at incidents has been recorded as follows:

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of Incidents	32	30	33	17	25
Average number of people on incident	21	12	15	16	15
Average effort in man-hours	170	48.5	88.25	168	82

These figures are approximate and do not include equipment maintenance and re-equipping of rescue vehicles. In this report, incidents are recorded normally where personnel have been deployed to the site or other operational actions are taken; other problems or alerts are not included.



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## Summary of Incidents for 2002

### 1. Saturday 26 January by MRO

*Manor Farm Swallet, unable to climb*

Whilst returning from a trip abandoned at Albert's Eye due to high water conditions, caver (f) was unable to climb the rift using the single rope in place and had requested that assistance be summoned. Lead rescue team made contact at September Rift. The casualty was rapidly hauled up the rift and assisted in climbing the entrance ladder. Both members of the party were then evacuated to the CharterHouse Centre for hot drinks, no further medical attention was required.

Radio communications as usual were difficult from this area; the Charterhouse Centre radio was again used as a relay for messages to Priddy.

### 2. Wednesday 30 January by DerbyCRO at 01:05 (for 4¼ hours)

*Culvert in Sinfin, Derby, assist police*

Search of culverted stream at police request - nothing found but it was clear someone had been in. The police were concerned for a suspected car thief that had taken refuge in the culvert when chased by them. The fugitive was not seen to exit for many hours causing concern for his welfare.

### 3. Saturday 2 February by DerbyCRO at 21:40 (for 2:05 hours)

*Giants Hole, exposure/exhausted*

Caver (m30) exhausted and unable to climb the Garlands Pitch. High water conditions. Given hot drinks and checked over by paramedic from EMAS Cave Rescue Support Group before escorting to surface.

### 4. Sunday 17 February by SWCRO at 16:15 (for 7 hours)

*Garth Iron Mine, unable to climb*

Two boys exploring mine had descended a 4 metre diameter pot on polyprop rope. One could not climb out; the other managed to get out and called police on mobile phone. Mountain Rescue called, who then called SWCRO. Boy hauled to surface unharmed.

### 5. Sunday 24 February by DevonCRO at 12:00 (for 4 hours)

*Pridhamsleigh Cavern, fall*

Caver (f36) slipped and fell whilst crossing a rift, sustaining a fractured right arm. Pain killers administered by ambulance staff and casualty evacuated to surface. Helicopter on standby.

### 6. Sunday 3 March by CRO at 18:10 (for 2:30 hours)

*Marble Steps Pot, medical emergency*

Caver (m36) sustained an injury to shoulder/arm when when lifting a tackle bag on climb up into Lower Main Chamber. Hauled up and escorted to surface.

### 7. Saturday 16 March by CRO at 07:30 (for 8 hours)

*Great Knotberry, Cumbria, assist police*

Search for missing man, presumed dead. Many services involved - mountain rescue, civilian and police search dogs. Shakeholes and caves searched and nothing found. Body found Sunday AM by police dog/handler.

### 8. Monday 1 April by CRO at 14:04 (for 1¼ hours)

*White Scar Cave, medical emergency*

Member of a guided party on show cave tour (f71) suffered an angina attack in the Battlefield at the far end of the show cave. Brought to the surface (in cave rescue stretcher) and taken to Airedale GH by Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

### 9. Saturday 13 April by SWCRO at 14:44 (for 12 hours)

*OFD II, fall*

Caver (m58) suffered a fall in the streamway near Fault Aven, suffering rib and back injuries. Injuries strapped up

and analgesia administered. He was then assisted to the surface mostly under his own steam thus considerably reducing the duration of the rescue. Assisted by members of GCRG and SWCRO/GW on standby.

### 10. Sunday 14 April by COMRU (for 9 hours)

*Rough Gill/Caldbeck area, assist police*

Requested by police to search mines in area following discovery of a note. Reliability of note questioned but training meet was altered so the requested search could be made. Nothing was found - possible hoax.

### 11. Friday 31 May by CRO at 17:20 (for 1 hours)

*Wilsons Cave, unable to climb*

Caver (m67) on solo caving trip turned back and had considerable difficulties climbing the cascades. Managed to surface safely as CRO arrived.

### 12. Monday 3 June by CRO at 15:04 (for 3¼ hours)

*Diccan Pot, fall*

Caver (m36) made an uncontrolled descent down rope of about 30 metres on the first pitch. There was a considerable amount of water going down the pitch making communications very difficult. He was treated as best possible in the arduous conditions and hauled to the surface and to the awaiting ambulance service and RAF Sea King from Leconfield. In Leeds General, he was found to have a core temperature of 24°C, severe chest and internal injuries, and 1½ litres of blood was drained from his chest, together with minor spinal fractures.

### 13. Tuesday 4 June by CRO at 21:15 (for 1¼ hours)

*Tatham Wife Hole, lost or overdue*

Party of 5 cavers (m47, 29, 18, 18, ?) were reported overdue but surfaced soon after CRO arrived.

### 14. Sunday 16 June by CRO at 12:13 (for 1 hours)

*Ingleborough Cave, medical emergency*

Member of a guided party in show caver (m72) suffered a fatal heart attack not far from entrance. Paramedics from WYMAS attempted resuscitation.

### 15. Sunday 16 June by CRO at 17:15 (for 5:30 hours)

*Marble Steps Pot, fall*

Caver (m40) fell some 5 metres down hole in boulders in the lower part of the Main Chamber. He was treated for possible spinal injuries and evacuated in spinal spint. Later diagnosed with soft tissue injuries to pelvis and lower back.

### 16. Monday 24 June by COMRU at 08:50 (for 3 hours)

*search of mines, assist police*

Search of mines at request of police and mountain rescue team. Nothing found by COMRU.

### 17. Monday 22 July by SWCRO at 13:40 (for 3 hours)

*Porth y Ogorf, other*

Member of guided party (m17) got into difficulty whilst trying to swim out through entrance pool. **Body** was found by cave rescue divers. Pool was 4 metres deep - summer conditions.

### 18. Sunday 28 July by SWCRO at 18:00 (for 1 hours)

*OFD I/II, lost or overdue*

Party of 5 cavers (m) reported overdue. Two members were met at the entrance having gone ahead to let rescue know the party were moving slowly but were able to make their own way out.



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- 19. Saturday 3 August by SWCRO at 19:30 (for 1 hours)**  
*OFD II, lost or overdue*  
Party (3m, 2f) made slow progress on trip from Cwm Dwr to Top Entrance. They were met at the Top Entrance as they left the cave.
- 20. Sunday 18 August by SWCRO at 16:50 (for 5 hours)**  
*Disused Mine, Llanelli, missing person*  
Request to search mine for missing person (m65) - nothing found.
- 21. Sunday 8 September by SWCRO at 21:30**  
*Agen Allwedd, lost or overdue*  
Cavers (m50, m40) reported overdue - were met by rescue team on the path from the cave.
- 22. Sunday 29 September by SWCRO at 16:30 (for 1 hours)**  
*OFD II, lost or overdue*  
Cavers (3m, f) reported overdue. They had route finding problems.
- 23. Monday 7 October by NWCRO at 10:00 (for 6 hours)**  
*Mine workings near Hafod-boeth, missing person*  
Assist police in search for missing man. Nothing found
- 24. Tuesday 15 October by SWCRO at 14:45 (for 6:30 hours)**  
*Llygad Lluchwr, Trapp, fall*  
Member of organised party (f14) suffered a fall into pit whilst leaving the cave, suffering neck and back injuries. Rescue complicated by the constricted nature of the entrance.
- 25. Friday 25 October by SWCRO at 16:20 (for 0:30 hours)**  
*Craig a Ffynon, flooding*  
Party of nine flooded in cave for short period. All members of party surfaced uninjured.

- 26. Wednesday 13 November by MRO at 10:15 (for 7¼ hours)**

*St Cuthberts Swallet, fall*

Initial report indicated that an experienced caver (m) had fallen from above the first pitch in Maypole Series and was now lying at the bottom with suspected leg and back injuries. He was being attended by two of the cavers who were in the original party of four. The informant had also returned to the scene. Rescue team suspected neck and spinal injuries and acted accordingly. Doctor attended to casualty later in rescue.

Casualty was lowered down from bottom of first pitch by conventional handling methods and onward into the Main Stream from Maypole Aven using mechanical breaking techniques. Route was rigged in advance via the streamway to The Water Shute to the bottom of Pulpit pitch. A succession of long hauls followed to extradite the casualty up Pulpit and Arete pitches and the entrance rift to finally land him on the surface at 18:05.

Given the weather conditions, attendance of the Fire Service was requested and appliances from Wells were rapidly tasked to the site, supported by an Officer from Bridgwater. They very quickly set their kit and efficiently dispersed the water to the ground to the rear of the Belfry. Their support was invaluable and our sincere thanks for their help especially as the national strike was due to start at 18:00 which they totally ignored.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Community Paramedic and the Ambulance Service, who supported the incident. The arrival of the emergency services also brought the incident catering unit.

- 27. Saturday 7 December by MRO at 15:02 (for 3 hours)**

*Swildons Hole, medical emergency*

Report of a trapped caver with a suspected leg injury at the Double Pots. Contact was made with injured party who was on his first caving trip. Although physically fit a pre existing condition was presenting him with a problem. The chap was escorted/assisted by the team to the surface. The operation was concluded by 18:00.