

Drinkers tell of 'huge bang' then collapse at Glasgow bar

GLASGOW, UK: Patrons inside The Clutha bar in Glasgow told how the roof collapsed shortly after they heard a giant thud, when a police helicopter plummeted onto the crowded bar.



The helicopter that crashed into a pub in Glasgow. This photograph was taken in 2010. Image:Wiki Images

In the initial confusion, client William Byrne said: "I thought 'has the band blown something electrical like a speaker?'".

He and others recounted how customers and passers-by helped pull the injured from the wreckage and tried to shift debris to allow others to escape.

At least one person was killed and 32 others taken by ambulance to city hospitals, police said, as the search for more possible survivors continued.

Revellers in the one-storey pub, on the banks of the River Clyde in the city centre, were watching Glaswegian ska band Esperanza play when the chopper hit the one-storey bar at around 22:25 GMT on a busy Friday (29 November) night last week.

Byrne, 45, from Coatbridge, east of the city, was in the bar with his brother and a friend, when the helicopter crashed.

"I was just coming back from the other side of the pub and there was a huge bang," he told BBC television.

"There was a couple of seconds of stillness after this bang and then the whole other side of the pub collapsed in on itself, the roof and the gantry of the bar fell down.

"The side we were in was covered in dust but, from debris, relatively unscathed," he said. The bar was plunged into darkness.

"The left hand side of the pub just collapsed. People on our side of the pub were so, so lucky. I went outside, we held the door open, trying to make people file out one by one. Then we went back in and helped lift the gantry so a few more people could get out," Byrne said.

Brendan Riordan, said it had been tough to move in the bar with the number of people at the concert. He told the BBC he heard "a very loud bang" before a cloud of dust filled the pub.

"I was on the right side of the pub where the band were performing", adding that the central and left sides had caved in. "After I exited the pub I saw people coming out covered in blood and dust. There were people quite desperate and just before I left the inside of the pub I noticed that the ceiling had fallen onto the bar," he said.

Retired firefighter, Edward Waltham said that people were not aware that a helicopter had crash-landed on the pub.

"I helped grab a couple of people. One gentleman in particular who was completely covered in dust, who had very shallow breathing and appeared to be quite badly injured." Waltham told the BBC.

"My initial reaction was to try not to move him because he had been in a crush situation. But as we were lying there other people were literally being pulled out of the pub and more or less thrown on top of us," he added.



The Clutha pub where the accident happened. Image: Wiki Images

Esperanza, the nine-piece group playing a free gig at the venue, said the group was safe and well.

"Our only concern now is for the safety and welfare of those less fortunate than ourselves," they said on their Facebook page. "Waking up and realising that it is all definitely horribly real," Jessica Combe, the band's bassist and general manager. said.

"Despite the situation everyone was so helpful and caring. The police, ambulances, firefighters all did a stellar job in the extremely difficult conditions," she said.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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