

At the Gunns Plains Cave Centenary Celebrations.
L to R: James Maskell, Trish and Geoff Deer, Ian Gadsby with Benjamin Deer, and Vicki Rolfe.



GUNNS PLAINS CAVE

6 January 1909 to present

– Geoff Deer

Tuesday 6 January 2009 saw the current operators of Gunns Plains Cave in North West Tasmania celebrate the Centenary of cave tours in this magnificent show cave.

Trish and Geoff Deer continue the tradition of private operators in this cave following in the footsteps of Bill Woodhouse, Ephraim Maxwell, Graham Maxwell, Des Wing, 'Curly' Willcox and others. Although the cave was taken over by the State Government in 1910, tours have been almost continuously run by lease holders.

On 6 January an open day was held with tours by donation. This turned out to be successful with over 150 visitors. It was a very relaxed day and tours happened as required. The collection raised about 2/3 of what would have been charged normally, so most got into the spirit. Does anyone know the exchange rate for Singapore Dollars (we got \$2.70) or Krona (we got 4kr)? No washers!

The Open Day was followed on the weekend of 10/11 January by more celebrations. Over 200 people toured the cave each day and approximately 100+ attended just to visit the display in the marquee. Many old newspaper articles from the Maxwell, Wing, Willcox and Deer eras were shown along with photos and memorabilia from throughout the years. Included in this were Des Wing's table and money pouch and the telephone he had hung in a tree for visitors to ring him when they required a tour.

Among the visitors were Rita Maxwell, wife of Graham Maxwell and daughter in law of Ephraim Maxwell, with members of her family, as well as

members of the Wing family. Visitors enjoyed browsing the display as well as the sausage sizzle that kept all well fed and were able to take a tour to check out the new lighting with guides decked out in period dress.

This was a great way for much to be learned about the cave and to find photos, articles and memorabilia that people have stashed away that usually no-one gets to see. All you need to do is turn 100 and you can get plenty of help.

VALE DES WING

It is with deep regret that ACKMA members are advised of the death of Des Wing, operator of Gunns Plain Cave from 1966 to 1991, who passed away on 14 May 2009.

Geoff Trish and Benjamin Deer at Gunns Plains Caves send our thoughts to Kay Wing and her family in Ulverstone, Tasmania, on the passing of Des. He was a long time guide and operator at the cave.

Des took over after his uncle Graham Maxwell died in 1966 and continued to run the cave even after he 'retired' to Ulverstone – making the 25km trip out each day. There are many people who return to the cave and fondly remember their trips through with Des. From his knowledge of the cave to the humour with which his tour was delivered, he is always well remembered.

