

Wise men take to the web

A virtual museum of TVW's colourful history is the result of a shared passion.

They are the three wise men of the TVW story, the guardians and facilitators of its ever-expanding history. Ken McKay, Richard Ashton and Gordon McColl. There is nothing they don't remember, cannot recall with a bit of effort or don't know who to ask when it comes to matters TVW.

Mr Ashton and Mr McColl were there on opening night, the first two studio cameramen in WA. Mr McKay was a video pioneer, working with the new recording medium from 1962. He was also a junior technician on the 1962 Empire and Commonwealth Games coverage which Seven, in partnership with the ABC in Perth, provided for other broadcasters. Before that, he had worked in audio as a boom and panel operator.

These three have taken their passion for the jobs they once did to a new level to maintain the State's TV heritage.

Initially, Mr McKay wanted to set up an internet-based TV equivalent of the Australian Museum of Motion Picture Technology for that institution but it was cancelled, so he pursued the local TV history separately, to ensure that Seven's 50th anniversary received wide internet coverage.

Left to right: Gordon McColl, Ken McKay and Richard Ashton.



Eventually, their website will cover all WA stations.

The three have been tireless in tracking down former employees, recording their memories and pillaging their stocks of photographs to add to the website.

"The website is now a collaborative affair involving as many veterans as we can muster," Mr McKay said. "Prominent people have been most helpful, or contributed content, including virtually all the major TVW executives from the early days. This includes managing directors, general managers, chief executives, news editors and the many rank-and-file.

They can tell a few wicked secrets themselves, too, dissolving into gales of laughter at the plumbing blockage caused by too many condoms in the sewers. They were there when there was an unfortunate mistake in the printing of tickets in TV bingo and there was a vast queue of cars on their way to Tuart Hill to claim their prize. They remember the inevitable crises that were part of community events like Pets on Parade, the Bathtub Derby, the ChocMilk regattas, the Birdman rallies, Fat Cat's Birthday Party, the Teddy Bears' Picnic, and, of course, the Christmas Pageant.

They mourn the great Garry Meadows, a hard-working and popular presenter and entertainer — he presented Spellbound, the Miss West Coast parades, was a Good Guy on 6PR and a regular compere of other shows — who lived hard and died young at 42.

They remember colour coming to WA and the impeccable attention to detail of production manager Max Bostock in lining up fireworks to be launched at six sites around Perth at midnight to mark the changeover.

And they positively peel with laughter at the memory of the naked dancer who appeared in the middle of a cricket broadcast. It was the practice that such racy footage be saved for the annual staff Christmas tape but this time, somehow, it escaped and went to air nationally during an all-stations and networks Christmas hook-up. The naughtiness was not Seven's fault but the switchboard did light up nonetheless.

Past and present TVW staff will gather at the studio on Sunday for an unofficial reunion. More than 550 have registered to attend and it promises to be alive with "remember whens . . ."

See the website at <http://watvhistory.com>. **7**