

The Museum's Exhibition Gallery nears completion

The development of new Kett Optometry Museum exhibition gallery in the Australian College of Optometry is nearing completion. Demolition and building work are finished and the walls and ceilings have been painted a dark, warm grey. The carpet is also dark grey. It's going to be a dramatic space with the objects lit by countless spot lights. Electrical work is not finished, which is why the photograph shows archivists Colin Bates and Barry Cole viewing the gallery in the dark. The display cabinets are being made and will be installed soon.



The archivists are busily finalising what is to be displayed and writing explanatory posters and the captions for the exhibits.

The official opening of the exhibition display area is planned for early 2019. The Friends of the Museum will be invited to the opening.

A Williams Lantern purchased

Archivist Pamela Sutton keeps her eye on eBay and auction houses. She recently bought for the Kett Optometry Museum, a Williams lantern, an instrument that was widely used in the United States to test the colour vision of railway workers. The lantern was also used in New South Wales in the first half of the 20th Century. (Victorian and Queensland railways used the Edridge-Green Lantern)

The lantern consists of a steel rectangular body with a rotating disc of 18 glass colour filters including reds, greens, blues, purple and clear. A diaphragm control operates by lifting a button on the top of the casing. A shutter can rotate to allow one- or two-coloured lights to be viewed. Internal illumination was provided by two kerosene lanterns, now lost.

It was originally designed by Dr Charles H Williams in 1899. This model was made in 1911. Hand writing inside the lantern indicates it was checked by its inventor in 1911.

The Museum has a collection of five lantern tests. In addition to the Williams it holds two



Edridge-Green lanterns, one dated 1910 and a later one about 1960, a Giles-Archer lantern test 1942 and a Farnsworth New London lantern 1951.

A Gilt Spyglass nearly 200 years old

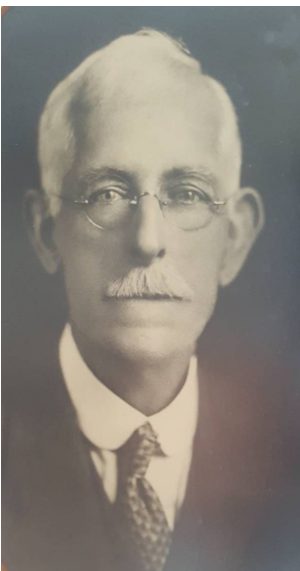
Archivist Pamela Sutton also found and purchased for the museum, a beautiful, gilt brass spyglass (small monocular telescope), which was used to see what was going on in the distance at the theatre or across a ballroom.

The spyglass was made in France about 1820 by an unknown maker. It has foliate & floral decorations around the eyepiece and a ribbed casing with a suspension ring that would allow the spyglass to be kept on a chain in the waist coat pocket. It is a tiny artefact, only 15 mm long when closed and its 5 draw telescopic action extends it to 40 mm.



The Sanderson Letters

This year is the 100th anniversary of Optometry Australia, the national body representing the interests of all Australian optometrists. It was founded in 1918 but it was not the first Australian optometry association.



Its predecessor was the Australasian Optical Association. It was founded at a meeting held in Sydney on 7 June 1904. The organiser was Sydney optometrist, Harry Sanderson, who is pictured. He solicited support from optometrists in other States and in New Zealand, and four of his letters have survived. Optometry Australia held the letters and has now donated them to the Museum.

They comprise two hand-written letters from Harry Sanderson addressed to Mr A. P. Greenfield, a leading optometrist in Queensland, and two typed letters to Mr Randal Wood, a prominent Sydney optician who would later act in several capacities in the proposed organisation. One letter to Wood invites him to an “uncommittable meeting” to discuss the establishment of an optical society and the second is a reply from Sanderson to Wood’s response to the invitation. The letters are dated February and March 1904 and foreshadowed the establishment of the Australasian Optical Association, the first national optometric association in Australia (it also had New Zealand members). The organisation had a short life: it gave up its national aspiration in 1909 when other States formed their own State associations. It continued as a State Association eventually morphing into Optometry NSW & ACT.

The letters are in a delicate state and the letters to Wood are pasted on one edge to the back of the Sanderson letter dated 17 February 1904 and cannot be removed without damage.

The letters give insight into the attitudes within the nascent profession and into Sanderson's personality and are a primary source for the history of optometry in Australia.

NSW Optometrical Auxiliary Files

The museum has acquired a donation consisting of six ring binders, labelled "History of the NSW Optometrical Auxiliary 1971 to 1987". The immaculately kept files were compiled by Nola Ford, assisted by Julie Henderson, Margaret Levick, Sandra Donovan, Jeannette Layland. The contents include the constitution of the group, minutes, newsletters, correspondence, advertising and marketing material, newspaper clippings, membership lists and materials, awards, ephemera, educational materials, photographs, reports etc.

The NSW Optometrical Auxiliary was a group that worked to promote optometry and eye care in NSW between 1971 and 1987, a period in which optometrists were not permitted to advertise and the opportunity to promote the profession and eye care was limited. The group comprised almost entirely of wives of optometrists. The auxiliary was particularly active in schools, teaching children about eye care using material developed by the American Optometric Association.

The content of the files paints a vivid picture of optometry and society at the time. There were few women optometrists in NSW during the 1970s and 1980s. Feminism was in its early stages and the wives of optometrists saw support of their husbands' careers as their duty. The Auxiliary declined as the number of women in the profession grew, the perception of women's role in society changed and advertising laws were relaxed. Similar groups existed in Victoria and Queensland.

We thank Jeanette Layland for the donation of these invaluable files.

THANKS TO DONORS (LAST THREE MONTHS)

Australian College of Optometry (Clinic), Colin Bates, Pam Sutton, Michael Aitken, Optometry Australia, Robert Kaye, Anthony Simon, Ron Parker (whose late wife was an optometrist in the ACT), Nathan and Suzanne Efron, Terry Blake, Jim Spencer.

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