



THE CYRIL KETT
OPTOMETRY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE
AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

NEWSLETTER NO.2 | SEPTEMBER 2018

Greetings Friends

Our number increases: we have 114 Friends of the Museum and they come from every State of Australia and the ACT.

The archivists have been busy. The most demanding job has been the detailed planning of the displays for the public exhibition gallery but the day to day work continues: we have received 87 donations from 14 donors in the last 3 months. This might not seem many but they include five boxes of photographs, books, reports and papers from Optometry Australia. A good deal of cataloguing lies ahead.

Despite being busy 101 items were catalogued in the last three months.

The donations include two particular gems from 1904. They are handwritten letters from Sydney optometrist H. Sanderson to A. P. Greenfield, an enterprising Brisbane optometrist, seeking support for the formation of the first optometrical association in Australia. This was to be the Australasian Optical Association. It held its first meeting on June 7 1904.

We will tell you about some of the other gems in future newsletters.

In this newsletter we would like to give you a back story about early women optometrists.

Congratulations Pam Sutton

This is just a short note to congratulate Pam Sutton on notching up thirty years in her role as an archivist with the ACO Kett Museum. Being such a meticulously organised person Pam could announce the date of her appointment as 11th August 1988.

Over this period the Kett Museum has made immense progress and Pam has increasingly honed her skills to make an enormous contribution. We are now looking forward to our most important step in opening the new Museum Gallery early next year.

The other four members of the archive team are mere males and this may give Pam an advantage. She is dedicated to precise detail whether finding and interpreting a tiny maker's mark on an antique spectacle frame or running down the patent details of a vintage tonometer. Pam is also expert at locating valuable museum items at auction and often then negotiating a bargain price.



Pam accomplishes all this valuable volunteer work while carrying on a very busy life generally. She is keenly involved with her family, church, sport and personal collecting activities as well as private optometric practice.

We truly don't know how we would manage without Pam. So hearty congratulations.

Who was the first woman optometrist in Australia?

[Optometry Australia News](#) on 7 March 2018 posted a lively but inconclusive debate about who was the first woman optometrist in Australia.

For a long time, there were few women in optometry. In 1936, of the 338 optometrists registered under the new Victorian Optometrists Registration Act, only 11 were women.

Not mentioned in the [Optometry Australia News](#) debate, is **Miss H. Moody**.

Miss Moody was in optometric practice before 1902 to at least 1914. A strong case could be made that Miss Moody was the first woman optometrist in Victoria, and maybe Australia. The Museum holds three testimonial letters addressed to her dated 1902, 1905 and 1914 (Cat # 2058). The Museum also holds her Certificate of Membership of the Victorian Optical Association dated 23 May 1911 (Cat # 2056). This was the day the Association was established. The register of members of the Victorian Optical Association (Cat # 1641) shows she was the only woman among 26 foundation members.

Miss Moody, who was the principal of a practice at 231 Bourke Street Melbourne, was not registered under the Opticians Registration Act of Victoria when optometrists were first registered in 1936. She may have retired from practice by that date.



Miss Ella Lillian Pink (1890-1986) is another who has been said to have been the first woman optometrist in Australia.

She spent her childhood in Chillagoe, Queensland, and qualified in optometry in London in 1915. She practised optometry in Australia from 1917 until 1953.

By chance, Professor Emeritus Nathan Efron, a Friend of the Museum and currently a grey nomad exploring Australia, was in Chillagoe in May this year. He emailed the Museum to tell us he had seen a poster in the local museum housed in the former courthouse that celebrated the notable career of Lillian Pink and claimed that "she was the first woman in the world to qualify in the trade of spectacle making". The claim is repeated in a hand-written

note on the back of a photograph of Lillian Pink held by the Kett Museum (Cat # 3495) stating 'Taken October 4 1913' and 'Born 1890 / Given Freedom of the City of London 30.9.15 / believed to be the world's first woman spectacle maker'

This is an overambitious claim since spectacles were first made in 1286, or thereabouts. She is also not the first Australian woman optometrist since she post-dates Miss Moody.

Friend of the Museum, Nathan Efron, drew our attention to the poster in the Chillagoe museum. However, she can claim another first – she was the first Australian woman to qualify as an optometrist in London.

In January this year, family members, Noel Dawson and Robyn Smith from Queensland, donated papers, photographs, certificates, spectacles and some equipment belonging to Miss Pink to the Kett Museum. We have just completed cataloguing the material and have assembled a picture of her life and achievements.



What has the Museum's research discovered about Lillian Pink? She was born in Benalla,

Victoria, on 27 January 1890. Her father was a watchmaker and jeweller who had migrated to Australia from England, landing at Melbourne. In seeking opportunities, the family moved to Benalla and then to Queensland, first to Charters Towers, then Chillagoe and then Atherton.

Miss Pink was schooled in Chillagoe, a once lively gold and copper mining town in outback Queensland. She did well at school and was selected as a “pupil teacher”. She was mentored by her teachers and sat examinations in Cairns to qualify as a teacher. Pink later taught in Chillagoe and nearby Mungana.

NOTABLE CAREER
LILLIAN PINK

One of the most distinguished personalities to graduate from the little Chillagoe State School was Lillian Pink: Lillian was the daughter of Wally Pink, who moved from Victoria to Chillagoe after his daughter's birth in 1890. He was a watchmaker, who set up a jewellery store on Queen Street. Lillian went to school in Chillagoe and was encouraged to become a teacher. She taught for a time at the Mungana school. To further her education, she would take the train down to Cairns to sit her examinations.

Before World War 1, she went to England to study at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute. It was at that Institute that she studied spectacle making, and it is believed that she was the first woman in the world to qualify at that trade. In 1915, she was given the honour of the Freedom of the City of London.

(From the Beryl Smith collection)



In 1913, at the age of 23, Lillian Pink gave up teaching to travel to London, ostensibly to visit English relatives. It is not known if she had any intention to study optometry, but her father was a watchmaker-jeweller and optometry was often a sideline in such businesses at that time.

She studied at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute, London, in 1913 and 1914 to prepare herself for the fellowship examinations of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers and the British Optical Association. The Museum has her certificate of successful completion of her studies (Cat # 3499).

Miss Pink passed her examinations to become a Fellow of the Spectacle Makers Company and was awarded the dioptric diploma of the British Optical Association. Her Fellowship of the Spectacle Makers Guild entitled her to both Fellowship of the Institute of Opticians (FIO) and her admission to Freedom of the City of London,

and she took advantage of both opportunities.

Lillian Pink returned to Australia in 1916 by ship and train via Canada because World War I, which had commenced in 1914, was continuing. Being entitled to the post-nominals FSMC, DBOA, FIO and having the Freedom of the City of London, was cause for acclaim when she got home and there were some newspaper articles about her (See clippings Cat # 3495).

She practised optometry in Sydney before returning to Queensland in 1923, settling in Atherton, 100 km west of Cairns, to practise within a jewellers shop, presumably her father's. She also opened a shoe shop in Atherton with her sister, although employees ran the shop.

The UK College of Optometrists tells us that their records show Lillian Pink as the first woman identified as coming from Australia to be awarded the FSMC. However, she was not the first woman optometrist to qualify in London: that honour belongs to two English women, Adaliza Dunscombe for the FBOA and Frances Troulan for the FSMC, both awarded in 1899.

Go the [Museum's website](#) and search for donor Dawson or Pink to see the 23 items in the Lillian Pink collection, including her Morton non-luminous ophthalmoscope (Cat # 3598).

This ophthalmoscope was designed by Andrew Stanford Morton in 1885 and was the most widely used ophthalmoscope until the 1930s.



THANKS TO DONORS (LAST THREE MONTHS)

Michael Aitken, Mitchell Anjou, Callum Arnold, Australian College of Optometry, Ian Bailey, Bryan Fuller, Elizabeth Hatfield, Judith Henry, Graham Hill, Nina Lennon, Optometry Australia, Jose Simon, Jim Spencer, Pamela Sutton.

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