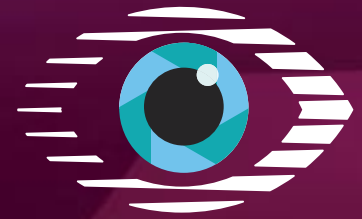




MAY 2019

Vision Now magazine



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Julian Williams - C R Williams Opticians

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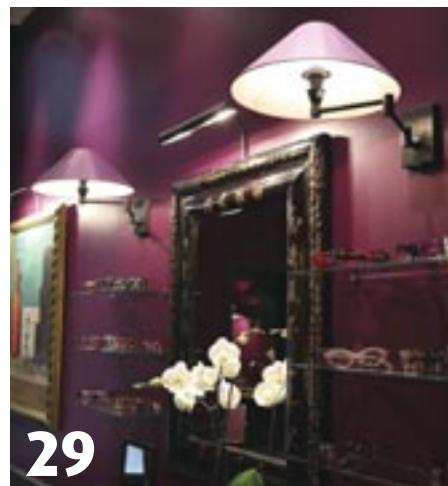
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## Editor's comment



In our ever-connected world, it is more than a little surprising that the optical sector finds itself in a continuing struggle with the government over the implementation of IT connectivity for primary optical care. While radical new technologies in contemporary eye health care open up across the globe, it seems that optical practices cannot even get themselves hooked up to the rest of the NHS to improve patient care and efficiency – despite the funds to do so apparently being available.

Last month, frustrated by ongoing delays, the Optical Confederation (OC) wrote an open letter to the powers that be at NHS England reminding them that many optical practices are continuing to rely on faxes (remember those?) to hospitals, or letters to “overstretched GPs” to refer patients into secondary care. The OC claims that in the last two years, NHS England has twice identified potential primary care budget underspends up of to £10m, that could not be used in the time available.

It is now urgently calling on the NHS to prioritise the “relatively small expenditure” (estimated to be £750,000) required for IT connectivity between optical practices and the rest of the NHS from current budgets in 2019/20 – “to avoid the need to rely on an end-of-year underspend that may not allow enough time for implementation”. Let us hope the OC’s appeal falls on listening ears – after all, it’s patients who suffer at the end of the day.

Fortunately, connectivity within the optical sector itself is excellent and in this month’s issue we have plenty of news and updates from NEG’s preferred suppliers – all designed to help independents make valuable, lasting connections with patients.

### Nicky Collinson

Editor

The Editor welcomes letters, articles and other contributions for publication in the magazine and reserves the right to amend them. Any such contribution, whether it bears the author’s name, initials or pseudonym, is accepted on the understanding that its author is responsible for the opinions expressed in it and that its publication does not imply that such opinions are those of The PK National Eyecare Group Ltd. Articles submitted for publication should be original, unpublished work and are accepted on the basis that they will not be published in any other journal. Acceptance of material for publication is not a guarantee that it will be included in any particular issue. Copyright © 2019 for Peekay Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying and recording, without the written permission of the publishers. Such written permission should also be obtained before any part of this publication is stored in a retrieval system of any nature.

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## 1 Optrafair



Frame selection at Optrafair 2019

Less busy for some, “fantastic” for others; Optrafair this year saw growth in several areas, including in the number of contact lens and eyewear companies exhibiting. NEG operations director, Phil Mullins, commented: “Although a quieter show than previous years, we had some great interaction with both current customers and potential new ones. Optinet was very well received, with many visitors looking to move from their current PMS provider to take advantage of the many new features offered by Optinet.”

Commenting after the show, Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) chairman, Andy Yorke, said: “Optrafair continues to put itself at the forefront of optical thinking and 2019 was no different. We were delighted with the look and feel of the show and the quality of visitors and, therefore, the level of genuine business conversations was fantastic. I’d like to thank our sponsors and partners for their continued support.

“However, the focus is now firmly on 2020,” Andy continued. “It’s a massive year for the whole sector and a massive year for Optrafair. We are in advanced discussions with other optical bodies to make Optrafair 2020 a super-sized event – broadening its reach to appeal to a massive audience and ensuring it’s the one event in 2020 anyone involved in eyes and eye health simply cannot afford to miss.” *Turn to page 17 to hear more about the FMO’s vision for the future.*

## 2 OFNC

Despite a bid by the Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC) for a three per cent increase in GOS fees for mandatory services and four per cent in additional services this year, GOS fees in England have been frozen for a fourth successive year. The government said this was because of “the continuing tight economic climate facing the NHS”. Voucher values will also remain the same, while CET fees and pre-registration grants will rise by two per cent compared to last year’s one per cent increase.

Stuart Burdett, OFNC chair, said: “There is no fair way this further freeze can be justified. The costs of providing NHS care have increased every bit as fast in optics as in other areas. This setback will further convince hardworking frontline clinicians that ministers in England simply don’t value the vital services we provide to NHS patients.” The OFNC said it had informed the government that “it cannot accept this unreasonable offer and that without an improved offer, a negotiated settlement is once again not possible”.

## 3 CooperVision

Returning to the British Contact Lens Association’s clinical conference and exhibition as a Partner sponsor, CooperVision will be celebrating “the difference eyecare professionals make every day”. Under the theme of ‘Celebrating incredible contact lens heroes’, there will be a focus on how CooperVision and eyecare professionals are taking on some of the biggest contact lens challenges. Highlights include the release of five-year study findings for the company’s myopia management lens, MiSight 1 day, and a look into the increasing importance and influence of health on material choice when prescribing contact lenses. Register for the conference at [www.bcla.org.uk](http://www.bcla.org.uk)



Celebrating at the BCLA

## 4 Heidelberg Engineering



ISS link highlighted

Heidelberg Engineering has launched a new practice marketing campaign to support new and existing customers with advertising the benefits of an extended eye health check to their patients. The campaign

includes posters, a roll-up banner and patient leaflet – and joins the wide range of existing materials already available to Spectralis owners, including patient mailers, reminder letter templates and a practice marketing video.

“The new campaign references the Spectralis situated on the International Space Station and the importance of having a comprehensive eye health examination to help optometrists set their practice apart from their competitors,” explained Emily Malbon, marketing manager at the company. “We are dedicated to providing our customers with the marketing tools and clinical education they need to build their confidence and make implementing multimodal imaging technology into their practice successful.” View the new materials at [www.eyecare-practice-tools.com](http://www.eyecare-practice-tools.com)



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5 **ABDO**

Barry Duncan

After lengthy discussions between the Welsh government, Optometry Wales, the Eye Health Examinations Wales (EHEW) clinical lead and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), all practising contact lens opticians (CLOs) in Wales can now apply to commence Wales Optometry Postgraduate Education Centre (WOPEC) EHEW accreditation training with the view of participating in the EHEW scheme on successful completion.

ABDO deputy chief executive, Barry Duncan, said: "Clearly this represents a further step forward in multi-disciplinary working between the optometrist and contact lens optician in the community optical practice. It also recognises the skill set of contact lens opticians and the role they can play in eye health provision. ABDO is delighted with the forward thinking approach of all colleagues in Wales and expresses sincere gratitude to those who have made this possible."

8 **Fight for Sight**

Fight for Sight is raising awareness of the importance of eye donation, and the current shortfall in corneas for transplant, after a YouGov poll found that 44 per cent of GB adults declared eyes as the body part they would least like to donate. More than half said they wouldn't donate their eyes because they felt too personal, while 33 per cent said the idea made them feel too

6 **Stepper**

The keys to the "svelte design" of model SI-50205 are a close relationship between designers, materials knowledge and manufacturing capabilities within Stepper, says the company. "Working in beta-titanium allows for the slightest of profiles," explained Peter Reeve, Stepper UK MD. "The ultra-light, flexible and strong material benefits from manufacturing technologies available to Stepper. These technologies allow the beta-titanium to be given a gently curved cross-section profile contour. This gives the frame an almost organic look."

The frame is designed to suit many face shapes, and contains hypoallergenic properties. "With satin finishes, the soft lines are enhanced to create a frame that looks as good as it is comfortable and the frame being lightweight [11g] ensures comfort lasts all day," Peter added. The SI-50205 is available in Satin Rose Silver, Satin Bronze Blue and Satin Maroon Gun-Metal.



Beta-titanium model SI-50205

7 **General Optical Council**

The General Optical Council's (GOC) new Standards for Optical Businesses will come into effect on 1 October 2019. They will replace the GOC's current Code of Conduct for Businesses, setting out the regulator's expectations for business registrants more clearly. Following a period of consultation, the GOC made some changes to reflect stakeholder feedback – "most notably to ensure that the standards were proportionate and reflected

the right balance of professional responsibilities between businesses and the staff that work for them". The GOC also made changes to ensure the standards were flexible enough to be applied across all four nations of the UK.



New business standards published

Marcus Dye, the GOC's head of standards and CET, said: "We encourage all businesses to comply with the standards regardless of whether they currently have to register with us because they represent good practice. Nonetheless, we continue to push for legislative reform to require all businesses carrying out restricted functions to register with us. This would create a level playing field for all businesses and as the professions move into more clinical areas, it is becoming increasingly important that regulation is in place to ensure all businesses are registered." View the new standards at [www.optical.org](http://www.optical.org)

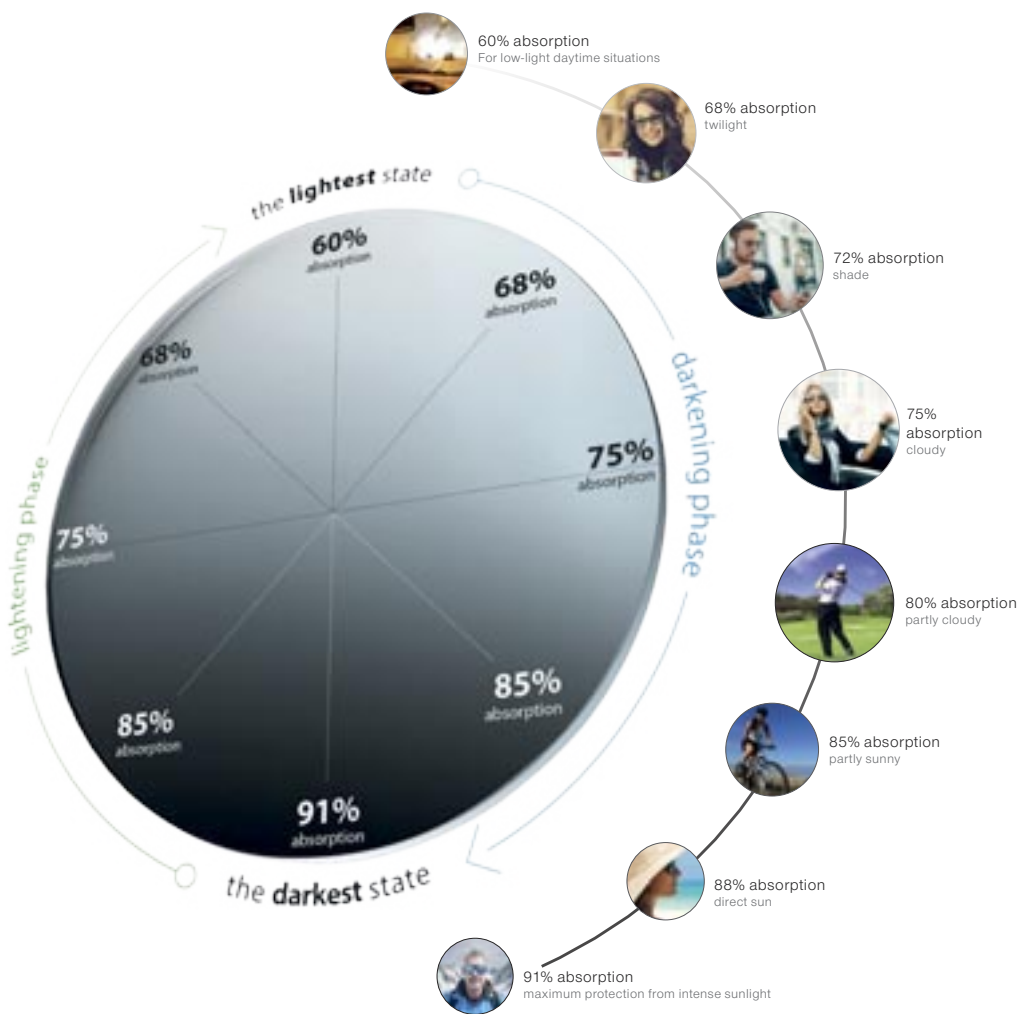
squeamish. However, after being informed of the significant shortfall of corneas available for transplant in the UK and the benefits of corneal donation in improving quality of life, 51 per cent of people who initially said they would be least likely to donate their eyes went on to say they would be likely to donate.

A new organ donation law (Max and Keira's Law) was given Royal Assent on 15 March 2019 - meaning that from Spring 2020, all

adults in England will be considered potential organ donors unless they choose to opt out or are in an excluded group. However, family members will be able to continue to refuse consent on behalf of their loved ones after their death. While the new law is good news for the overall organ donation pool, Fight for Sight said it was concerned that its research indicated people could restrict the donation of their eyes, either their own or on behalf of a loved one.

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## 9 International Eyewear



Soft, feminine design: Brendel 902287

The Brendel promise is simple: 'Fashion for the face' designed by females for females. Brendel frames, available from International Eyewear, are inspired by the creations of renowned international fashion designers, stylists and make-up artists – offering "affordable eyewear for the everyday woman". One of the latest models 902287 (pictured) pairs the lightness and transparency of stainless steel with innovative T15 material, reflecting the feminine appeal of the Brendel brand. The soft eye shape is designed to complement the wearer's feminine facial features and taking inspiration from the latest catwalk trends, Brendel 902287 builds on the 'barely there' trend. The style is available in Palladium/Rose and Rose Gold/Grey Blue.

## 10 Marchon



Unisex style with NYC roots

Marchon's new Admired collection, launched under its Marchon NYC brand, features 10 styles incorporating on-trend details and popular design attributes. The new series of styles are designed for men and women aged from 18 to 44 years and each style is crafted using premium materials and laminations, completed with spring hinges for superior comfort. The designs are additionally rendered with an easily identifiable chamfered temple tip design to distinguish the sub-collection. The colour palette consists of classic tones of Black, Teal, Navy, Burgundy, Blush and Crystal, as well as Horn and Tortoise. The metal styles are featured in Silver, Light Gold, Rose Gold, and Satin Gunmetal finishes.

## 11 Myers La Roche



Patrick Myers (left) with Dominic Watson

Myers La Roche recently celebrated its first major practice sale in the hearing care market for its new division, Audiology Business Central (ABC). ABC sold the Heybridge Hearing Centre in Essex to an optometrist practice owner, with the sale completing in a record two weeks. Myers La Roche and ABC managing director, Dominic Watson, said: "This sale illustrates how rapidly, and by how much, the optical market is changing.

"Practitioners shouldn't be stuck to a fixed myth on how to grow and sell their business. There is great disruption across optics now with much change going on in the market but also growth and more opportunities for independents. There are huge opportunities to utilise from existing locations and fixed overheads by selling additional services such as audiology."

## 12 College of Optometrists

The College of Optometrists has completed research on the experiences of vision assessment for people living with a form of dementia that impacts vision. The research, published in *BMJ Open*, focused on posterior cortical atrophy (PCA) which can result in unusual visual phenomena, such as finding it easier to read smaller fonts than larger ones, as well as visuospatial and perception problems. These can result in misdiagnosis unless health professionals know about, and test for, the condition specifically.

The project, undertaken with researchers at the Dementia Research Centre at University College, London, guided three patients living with PCA through tests administered by three different health professionals: an optometrist; an ophthalmologist; and a neurologist. The key finding was a quick and simple visual recognition test that showed some promise in helping clinicians to differentiate between vision problems with neurological origins, from those with optical/ocular causes.



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13 **Marchon**

New Flexon Black line for men

Flexon Eyewear from Marchon has made its first foray into the men's luxury optical market with the launch of Flexon Black. The six styles offer streamlined classic contours shaped using ultra-lightweight, flat form stainless steel, while micro-detailing in edgier materials and shapes add texture, dimension and style. Nose pads are supported by moulded geometric wire and select styles feature a patent-pending screwless hinge with a unique hook mechanism that seamlessly secures temple to frame front.

"Flexon Black represents the most advanced and sophisticated expression of Flexon eyewear yet," said Thomas Burkhardt, senior vice president of global brands, marketing and design at Marchon Eyewear. "Flexon Black answers the call of discerning luxury eyewear customers who are looking for simply the best product, with regard to design sensibility and technically advanced construction."

14 **ABDO**

To help members consider the issues that might be affected by Brexit, including employment and VAT, the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) has issued new guidance on a range of topics relevant to optics. ABDO policy and public affairs officer, Debbie McGill, said: "We have put together guidance specifically for our members working in the optical industry, focusing on relevant topics to provide information and guidance where possible. We encourage members to monitor the links we have provided to individual organisation and government websites for on-going up-to-date information." Members with questions are advised to contact Debbie McGill by emailing [dmcgill@abdolondon.org.uk](mailto:dmcgill@abdolondon.org.uk)

16 **WCSM**

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM) has announced that it plans to withdraw its accredited qualifications for optical assistants. Level 4 Diploma courses for optical technicians and optical assistants, leading to the SMC (Tech) and SMC (OA) awards, will continue to be available from ABDO College. It is anticipated that ABDO will take on the role of awarding body for these two nationally-recognised qualifications. ABDO College is also now offering a new introductory course for optical assistants (see page 15).

Commenting on the changes, WCSM's Master, John McGregor, said: "The world has changed and it is right that we should move with it. Our qualifications were an important step in gaining recognition for the vital part played by optical assistants and technicians in High Street practices. Those who have passed a WCSM qualification are rightly proud of what they have achieved. The time has now come for others to take on the important task of equipping assistants and technicians for what lies ahead."

15 **Synergeyes**

Phil Thompson at a previous fitting event

SynergEyes UK will put the spotlight on the advantages of Duette contact lenses at the British Contact Lens Association's clinical conference later this month. The company will be emphasising that Duette Progressive is now available in a centre-distance, as well as a centre-near, design. Recent winner of an Optician Award, it has the visual performance of a gas permeable contact lens, combined with the comfort of a soft lens, so is seen as an obvious choice for practitioners for their astigmatic presbyopes.

At the event, SynergEyes UK's head of professional services, Phil Thompson, will present in the Exhibitor Pavilion on Friday 31 May at 3.45pm. His presentation, 'Fitting astigmatic presbyopes: now you really can have your cake and eat it', will focus on the empirical fitting success of the Duette Progressive lens. "We are aiming to continue to spread the word regarding the opportunity presented by Duette hybrid lenses for normal/regular astigmatic patients who don't get a stable fit or vision with soft torics and/or are presbyopic," said Phil.



Rudi Bonnici receives his diploma

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17 Positive Impact



New gel formulation

Positive Impact will launch the new formulation HydraMed Night gel at the British Contact Lens Association's (BCLA) upcoming conference in Manchester. Positive Impact's sales and marketing director, Nick Atkins, said: "Dry eye is a disease that is on the increase and most patients aren't being managed effectively with just drops. It affects contact lens wearers and non-contact lens wearers alike and in recent years technology for both diagnosis and management have made significant advances."

Nick will present in the Exhibitor Pavilion on Friday 31 May at 3.30pm. His presentation, 'One dry eye drop to replace them all!'; will focus on the unique formulation and performance of HydraMed, which is designed for more sensitive eyes. His aim is "to get all those practitioners who keep saying improving their dry eye service is on their 'to do' list to finally do it."

18 Association of Optometrists

Recent research from the Association of Optometrists (AOP) shows that on average female optometrists earn 15.5 per cent less than men. The findings have come from the Association's 2018 Optometrists' Futures survey, conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES). Analysis of the survey data shows that when factors such as experience, time in the job and extra responsibilities were controlled for there was still a statistically significant gap in pay between men and women in the sector.

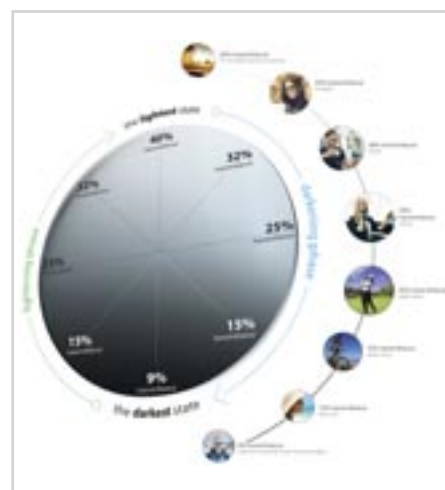
Tony Stafford, AOP policy director, said: "The government's gender pay gap figures are very useful for showing the extent of inequality right across workplaces, where senior positions are often held by men. But they don't tell us if men and women are being paid differently for doing similar jobs. The AOP's survey has looked at that question." The AOP will use the data to develop advice and resources for members who employ optometrists, to help them confirm and demonstrate that their approach to pay is fair.

20 International Eyewear



Masculine appeal: model S605

19 Lenstec Optical Group



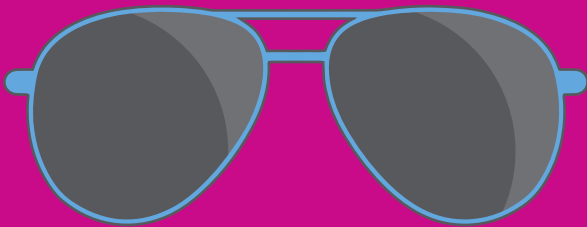
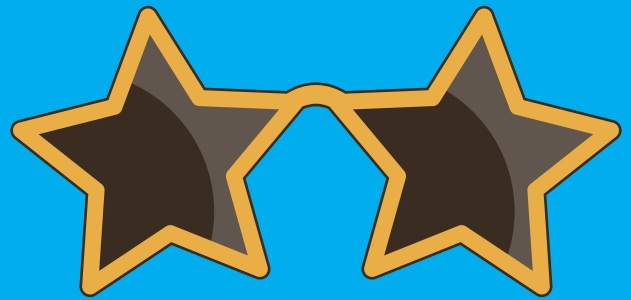
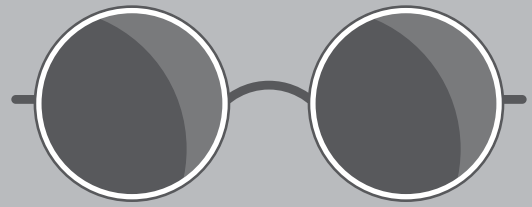
Benefits of NuPolar Infinite Grey lenses

Describing the NuPolar Infinite Grey range as "a new generation of prescription sunwear products", Lenstec explained that combining NuPolar polarisation technology with photochromic NuPolar Infinite Grey addressed "a very important aspect of adaptability to corrective sun lenses".

NuPolar Infinite Grey is said to offer the widest possible range of light transmittance while maintaining 99 per cent polarisation efficiency, so won't compromise the blocking of glare.

In the lightest state, it has 65 per cent light absorption and when fully activated, lens light absorption reaches 91 per cent. The lens also allows application of anti-reflection or mirror coatings without any compromise of photochromic performance, "offering wearers the opportunity to use the most stylish sunwear normally available only in non-corrective sunglasses".

Patients looking to make a statement with their sunwear this summer need look no further than the latest collection of sunglasses from Storm London. Model S605 (pictured) is a bold, double-bridge square aviator with an on-trend straight brow bar. Layered acetate, incorporating a black exterior and signature Storm London Lazer Blue interior, creates a masculine appeal. The colour palette is complemented with Solid Grey CR39 lenses, and the logo is placed on the integrated flex hinge with a brushed finish.



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## 21 Louis Stone Optical



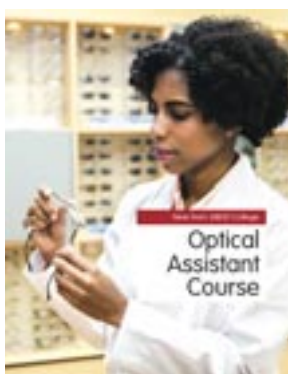
Flippin' great prize

Louis Stone recently sponsored the Aston Eyeball, held at the Marigold on Valentine's evening. Sara Butterworth (*pictured*), a second-year student, was the winner of Louis Stone's flippers in the raffle on the night. She said afterwards: "Thank you so much to Louis Stone for the flippers. They're great and I can't wait to start using them in practical classes and clinics. The Aston Eyeball was fantastic and everyone had a great time – and thank you for sponsoring it."

Farzana Khatun of Aston Optics Society added: "About 200 students attended the ball, including some optometry staff members. Our upcoming plans for the Optics Society are to sell hoodies to our students, and also maybe hold an event to raise some money for a charity."

## 22 ABDO College

The new Optical Assistant course from ABDO College is designed to suit those who have just started working in optics, and those who have been in practice for some time and want to formalise their knowledge. The course combines practical tasks to develop practice-based skills with online modules and workshops – so can be undertaken whilst continuing to work full-time. The workshops will cover repairs and pre-screening and take place at the ABDO National Resource Centre in Birmingham.



ABDO College head of operations, Stephen Hertz, said: "Optical education has changed dramatically in recent years with a new focus on more on-the-job training. Having worked in the arena of optical support training for the last few years we find that there is less demand for an examination based course at the entry level, and we are delighted to see this new course with its emphasis on in-practice tasks and practical workshops. It will provide a firm foundation for people to progress to the level 4 OA and OT courses and the ophthalmic dispensing courses." Apply by 30 August for a September start at [www.abdocollege.org.uk](http://www.abdocollege.org.uk)

## 23 Transitions Optical



Transitions Style Mirrors in gold

Launched at Optrafair 2019 by Essilor and BBGR, the new Transitions Style Mirrors range features a mirrored effect combined with a Transitions XTRActive lens. When indoors, the lens has a light flash mirrored effect and it turns into a full-mirrored sunglass outdoors. Like every Transitions XTRActive lens, it reacts to UV and small

parts of visible light to darken behind the windscreen of a car. The tint intensifies when the user moves outdoors, allowing the wearer to have the right tint at the right time. They protect the eyes from the brightest sun thanks to the mirror and the tint that can reach a category three. The lenses are available in blue violet, blue green, silver and gold.

## AN INDEPENDENT VIEW

### Eye Promise update

A few years ago, the AIO council decided that it should introduce a quality mark for independent practices, which offer great eye health care for their patients, as a way for those practices to stand out in their communities.

The Association's first attempt at this was called the Independents Code (or IC) which proved to be too bureaucratic, and did not have sufficient resonance for consumers. It was back to the drawing board and the result has been the creation of the Eye Promise, greatly simplified from the IC, which carries much stronger consumer facing branding.


Since its launch in 2018, the Eye Promise has been rolled out to more than 50 AIO member practices offering great long-term eye health care for their patients. This is in line with the target that the AIO set itself for achieving a steady and sustainable growth across the country, which it now intends to ramp up over the next 12 months.

The five promises that practices sign up to are simple but meaningful:

- We put long-term eye health care first
- We give patients as much time in the consultancy chair as their individual needs require
- We will always try to offer repeat appointments with the same practitioner
- We will use state-of-the-art imaging equipment as a way of monitoring long-term eye health
- We will only recommend eyewear that will benefit you

With strong promotion in local communities by the practices which have signed up, plus a new social media publicity campaign based around an Eye Promise Practice of the Month feature, the quality mark for great independents is taking hold with the general public. It is playing an important role in helping to build awareness about the importance of regular, comprehensive eye examinations.

Association for  
**AIO**  
Independent Optometrists  
and Dispensing Opticians



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PRECISION FOR VISION



# Vision for the future

FMO chairman, Andy Yorke, sets out the FMO's vision for the future

In the March issue of *Vision Now*, editor Nicky Collinson asked how the optical industry could continue to sustain two annual trade shows. This is indeed a tricky question. Being a membership organisation, the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) aims to be completely transparent and listens to its members.

So in January, we decided to ask our members a simple question: would you like us to continue working with the Mark Allen Group (MAG) to provide Optrafair as an annual optical exhibition, or would you prefer to take a counter proposal from another organiser? Despite their anxieties about two shows every year, members decisively voted for the FMO to continue working with MAG.

Stuart Burn, managing director of Performance Finance and FMO vice chair, myself and other members of the board were delighted to be given a clear mandate by the majority of our members to pursue our long-term strategy, allowing us to plan not only for Optrafair 2020 at the NEC, but for Optrafair 2021-2023 and beyond.

Having celebrated 100 years of the FMO in 2017, we feel that we now need to concentrate on the future, focusing on new technology within optics, which will provide both opportunities and threats to our members. We feel that as well as having the support of our members, we have the backing of the whole optical industry.

## BRINGING THE INDUSTRY TOGETHER

Let me report on a vibrant, reinvigorated Optrafair 2019 at the NEC, where we welcomed over 130 exhibitors, a number of whom were exhibiting for the first time. The exhibitors represented an increasingly broad range of organisations. We are working even more closely with ABDO, FODO, the BCLA and other professional bodies and trade associations to extend Optrafair's appeal.

This year's exhibition included a brand new format for education as well as the Spectrum Catwalk, an Eyewear Boutique, a Peer Review Hub, a Low Vision Zone and a Networking Bar, which were all well received. Of course, we wouldn't be able to



Andy Yorke (right) and Stuart Burn open this year's show

stage Optrafair without our loyal sponsors, including Essilor, the Hakim Group, Optos, Topcon, Heidelberg Engineering, Johnson and Johnson Vision and Bondeye.

We took the opportunity to talk to exhibitors, speakers and visitors about how we can bring the whole industry together for Optrafair 2020, which is shaping up to be a massive event with a more inclusive atmosphere, encompassing the whole optics industry, including ophthalmology, contact lenses and pharmaceuticals. It will also have additional features such as an optical fashion competition, a crèche for youngsters and a Practice of the Future. Exhibitors gave us even more great ideas for 2020 at FMO's Networking Bar at Optrafair.

Of course, the FMO isn't just about Optrafair, it's primarily about our members, and we are delighted to have recently welcomed aboard the Hakim Group, Cosium UK, Luneau Technology and Finance 4 Eyecare. These companies are from different sectors of the optical industry, helping us broaden the FMO's membership and appeal – and adding a great deal of business acumen, experience, insight and knowledge to both FMO resources and our membership.

The FMO is improving and reinstating benefits and enhancing engagement for

members throughout the year. For example, we are currently tracking the implementation of the EU Medical Devices Regulation, which includes the issue of Unique Device Identifiers, ISO standards and wider EU regulatory issues, and covers what happens to medical device regulation post Brexit. This includes costs of registration, understanding the new UK regulatory system, what this means for trading in the UK and the EU, and what happens to CE markings issued by UK notified bodies.

As a founder member of the Optical Confederation, the FMO uses the coalition to allow members to respond to consultations and ensure that members have an influence on strategic issues. This year, members can engage with their peers at the annual general meeting, an extraordinary general meeting, general meetings, regular lens, equipment and frame focus group meetings and standards panel meetings. Communication with members has been strengthened via regular online newsletters backed up by social media engagement.

Whilst acknowledging that supporting two annual optical exhibitions presents a tricky question that won't go away any time soon, our mission is to ensure that Optrafair is the *only* exhibition that truly represents all sectors of the UK optical industry.

# CALLING ALL CYCLISTS

Join **Vision Aid Overseas** and  
**Cycle For Sight** this year!

**Vision Aid Overseas**, with support from **ZEISS**, is bringing back **Cycling for Sight** for 2019 - the challenge that pushes you to your limits whilst fundraising to bring eye care and glasses to some of the world's most isolated communities.



Whether you are a club cyclist, a gym enthusiast who prefers a 'spin class' or the owner of a dusty old Raleigh in the shed ... join #TeamVAO!

This year, you can choose to cycle for sight in one of three ways:

1. **L'Etape UK Chiltern Hills** (formerly the Chiltern 100 Cycling Festival) - 14th July 2019
2. **The Prudential Ride London - Surrey 100** - 4th August 2019
3. **DIY Cycling for Sight** - join an organised cycling event near you; ride your own route, wherever you like; or use a static bike and set your own goal to complete.

For more details on how you can get involved, please visit:

**[www.visionaidoverseas.org/cycling-for-sight-2019](http://www.visionaidoverseas.org/cycling-for-sight-2019)**

Event sponsored by:



**Vision Aid Overseas**

Incorporating OPTOMETRY GIVING SIGHT in the UK



# The story behind Stepper

Since 1970, Stepper has been delivering benefit-focused eyewear solutions, writes  
**Alex Davis**

**The backstory to every Stepper frame is the reason for the brand's success. Stepper is a 'human' brand with genuine empathy for the wearer. Understanding what every wearer needs from their frame, and striving to deliver this through innovation and technology, is as true today as it was in 1970.**



Hans Stepper

Stepper eyewear is designed and manufactured by a single team of Stepper people with a genuine common vision of the true importance of eyewear. All Stepper people know that only once a frame delivers on the fundamental needs of comfort and fit, can the frame then go on to delight the wearer with its shape, colouring and detail.

Stepper is a brand that realises the human need to be empowered. A frame that holds a lens, perfectly in front of the eye, to deliver effortless vision correction allows the individual to explore and discover their world in a way they couldn't before. The Stepper frame sits naturally on their face offering comfort without compromise.

The key to understanding Stepper frames is to know the company's ophthalmic roots. Hans



Hans's father's opticians in Stuttgart

Stepper is the son of an optician and himself a German 'Master Optician'. 2020 marks 50 years of Stepper frame manufacture. In an eyewear world full of non-optical brands, it is rare to find a company that has managed to remain true to its ophthalmic roots and survive where 'the brand' has too often become the most important factor in the buyer's decision making.

To help understand the Stepper story, here follows extracts from a forthcoming biography on Hans Stepper, the company's founder. Hans reveals, in his own words, his philosophy behind frame design and manufacture and discloses the key moments in his life that have resulted in the frames he continues to produce today.

## A FRAME MAKER'S STORY

### *Before working life*

"My father was an optician and he learned as an apprentice in Stuttgart. When in 1936 he opened a little shop, he was quite successful, but only on his own. He wasn't a great entrepreneur, but he had a nice shop.

"After the war, my father came home from Italy. He tried to re-open the shop, but it was difficult to get building materials, so he took silk stockings from my mother and these were exchanged for concrete and things like that. Copper was also very important. I was 11 so me and my friend went around all these destroyed buildings and tried to find copper wire as you could exchange it against a lot of other things.

"My father persevered and opened the optical shop. He was always a very happy man and he made a nice living and was

able to have savings. It was a one man show though. Once he had an apprentice, but it didn't last, so when I became older I helped him. I could even glaze frames by hand when I was 16. I went to school but apart from school, I helped in the shop."

### *Optical apprenticeship*

"As my father was an optician, why should I not be an optician? So after I left school with an A-level, my father looked for a good apprenticeship position in a little town nearby with a famous optician.

"After a month in the practice, I thought I should make a frame. I got some material from a frames company and made a frame out of it. I polished it and then it went out into the shop and was sold. So, then the next day I made another one which also sold, and I developed quite an interest in designing, and not only designing, but also making frames. That gave me extra responsibility.

"One company called Metzler encouraged me, saying: 'As you are so good at frame-making, after your apprenticeship, why don't you go to another country and make frames instead of working in an opticians.' So, after being there for six months, I went to Finland because there was a company called Instrumetario, a very famous company at that time that had been looking for a designer to make handmade frames.

"I was recognised by very important people, ambassadors and people like that and then started a little frame production business on my own as I didn't only want to design frames, I wanted to do production as well.

Every frame tells a story



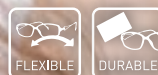
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Frame style shown: **SI-30137**



Hans creating eyewear as a young man

"I wanted to go back to Germany to obtain my Master's degree in optics. I achieved the Master's degree after half a year, but I had not given up the connection with the Metzler people. They asked me if I would come back one day per week to create designs so I went to their place, created a design and made the frame in the evening. Some of them were accepted, which gave me a nice little bit of extra money."

#### **Early injection moulded frames**

"When I was working at Metzler they said they wanted to make injection-moulded frames which had a reputation for being difficult and the quality was not very good. But I thought, why not use this method for making good frames?"

"I had a very nice customer in my opticians role, who bought his own eyewear from us and it turned out that he had a factory. I told him my dream would be to make injection-moulded frames and he told me

he could handle this, so we created a little company. I quit my job from the opticians and my design job with Metzler.

"My customer was called Mr Ide, so we called the company Stepper and Ide. We invested a good part of our capital in a jewellery workshop because, when in Finland, I had a good relationship with a goldsmith as my frames had metal, gold and silver decorations. With Mr Ide we were making some jewels in the evening, and that's where the 'SI' comes from.

"Comfort and fit are certainly the most important part of our success. When you mould a frame, you can mould it much better in three dimensions than if you cut it out of a piece of acetate, so that means that a moulded frame has much better fitting properties, especially on the nose, so that is what we developed, a nose fit system. The frames were also lighter than other frames.

"I was never a revolutionary, but I was a good frame-maker and that became the essence of Stepper frames. We can justify the comfort of Stepper frames, it's not a gimmick. One of the secrets of the future is that we are a company of professionals in frame-making, not in outrageous designs, but in good frame-making and good frame-making is more important than at any other time."

#### **The future**

"There is an ongoing demand in optics for individual service and this cannot be compensated for by online shopping, so there will remain a great need for individual handling of customers. Of course, part of the market will disappear but then it is the question: how can the modern optician blend online knowledge with their customer base? That seems to be very

important, whether an optician can increase their presence in the market through modern technology and communications.

"An optician only sitting in their ivory tower will have a problem but developing and trying to analyse the future and respond will mean there is always a future demand for them. We have seen that in the UK many people want to go to an optician because they want to have very, very good service."

#### **YOUR STORY**

So, how do you improve *your* story by maximising profitability from making good purchasing decisions. In 2017, *Vision Now* published Stepper's proven model for analysing stock sell through. Since that article was published, yet more opticians have adopted this model with great success; changing the way they evaluate frame sales performance and their frame buying choices.

In short, here are the recommendations:

#### **Buy what you like**

Feel free to buy frames based on what you like. As long as you like them because they meet customers' needs, have a good stock sell through and make good profit. A rational, analytical approach to stock and buying will make a significant improvement in your business.

#### **Understand what you are measuring**

Consider what you want to get out of any analysis and decide what you want to measure. Measure meaningful groups of frames that you can compare the sales performance against within your practice. This will, in turn, influence how you organise and merchandise your frame product. This discipline will also help your staff and your customer understand your frame offering.

In summary, to maximise stock sell-through:

- Organise your stock into meaningful categories, groups and sub-groups
- Once organised, maintain stock numbers in these groups
- Measure sales and review every three months
- Identify under-achievers and star performers
- Take action by increasing or reducing frame sub-group stock profiles accordingly
- Be mindful of the profitability of sub-groups

**Alex Davis is head of brands and marketing at Stepper Eyewear and former marketing director for Rayner Opticians.**



Hans attending a Stepper Eyewear event in Brazil 2018

# Duette

Award-winning contact lenses



Now astigmats and presbyopes can have their cake and eat it, writes Phil Thompson

When asked which contact lens type generally provides the patient with the best vision, contact lens practitioners of a certain age will likely respond that this has to be a rigid lens of some type. Similarly, many of those who, like the author, were fitting in the 1980s and early 90s, when presented with an uncomplicated low myope with a 1.00D cyl, would most likely have discussed the superior visual performance of RGP lenses as the simplest and most effective way to correct the patient's astigmatism.

Younger readers need to appreciate that 'back in the day' there were no disposable lenses and soft torics were still largely lathe cut and not made with the accuracy and reproducibility of today's products. Similarly, many fitters when presented with an RGP patient seeing 6/5 on the chart, but complaining they were still aware of their lenses, would likely have mused, "If only there was a lens that could give me the visual performance of an RGP combined



SynergEyes has been making hybrid contact lenses since 2005



Duette lenses let patients have their cake and eat it

with the comfort of a soft lens". A best of both worlds hybrid type lens with an RGP centre and a silicone hydrogel skirt perhaps?

SynergEyes has made hybrid contact lenses for irregular corneas since 2005. It launched its Duette family in the USA as far back as 2010 and has thousands of happy users across the world. Duette uses a unique lens material developed by SynergEyes and not available from other laboratories. Additionally, all lenses are unique designs manufactured in its state-of-the-art facility in California. It's a proprietary combination of a high Dk gas permeable centre and silicone hydrogel skirt, bonded by SynergEyes' patented HyperBond junction technology.

#### KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS

One of the key features of Duette is its HyperBond junction technology. The Hyperbond has been tested to 300 per cent of the original lens size, and means the lens is guaranteed never to split at the junction. The lens also features proprietary high Dk material: 130 Dk gas permeable and 84 Dk silicone hydrogel skirt ensuring excellent ocular health. A UV blocker helps protect from the sun's harmful rays, and a two-stage plasma treatment enhances comfort and reduces deposition. The lens provides uncompromised optics, correcting virtually all corneal cylinder powers. It corrects all axis directions and vision is not affected by lens rotation.

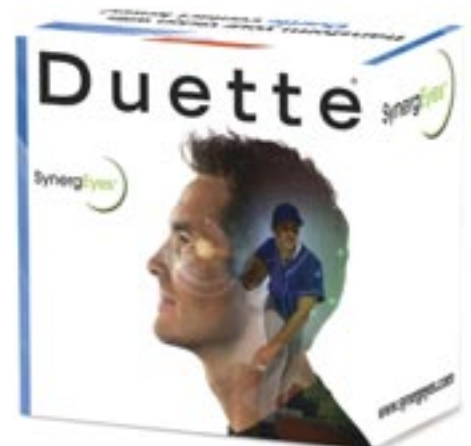
The ideal candidates for Duette hybrids are mild to high astigmats, presbyopic astigmats, those soft toric patients who cannot achieve the same level of clarity as with their spectacles and run the risk of dropping out (including those who have

already dropped out), sports people and anyone requiring enhanced vision.

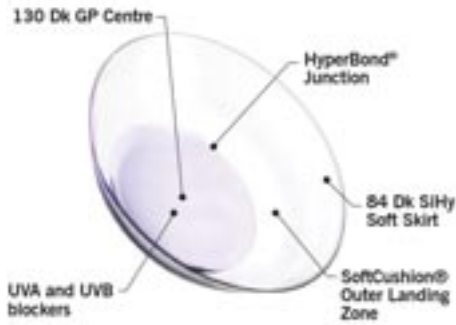
#### FITTING SIMPLICITY

Importantly, it is possible to ascertain the fit of a Duette lens without the use of sodium fluorescein (NaFl). This is a potential benefit for practitioners who started practising during the decline of RGP fitting over the last 20 years or so. This is the approach advocated by SynergEyes for its Duette lens. The lenses are assessed initially in the same way as a soft lens, by judging the lens centration and movement. Then the relative alignment of the RGP is confirmed via over-refraction.

The fitting philosophy allows for a tear lens of around +0.50D (0.10mm steeper than flattest K) and so it is possible to check and adjust the fit based upon the expected over-refraction. Of course, more experienced practitioners can confidently use regular NaFl with the silicone hydrogel skirted Duette lenses.



The Duette family launched in the USA in 2010



A key feature of Duette is its HyperBond junction technology

The Duette lens has long been available in the UK in single vision and centre-near multifocal lens designs with multiple adds. Last year, the range was expanded with the release of the new Centre Distance Progressive design with FlexOptics technology.

Duette Progressive, named Contact Lens Product of the Year at the 2019 Optician Awards, now offers maximum flexibility of lens selection to the contact lens practitioner in order to fully and successfully correct their astigmatic presbyopes at distance and near. SynergEyes believes that fitting astigmats, especially astigmatic presbyopes, opens up a new and currently untapped business opportunity for practices – and that the high performance of this new contact lens will build patient loyalty and retention.

**NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITY**

Currently there are very few options for any contact lens-wearing presbyope who has astigmatism  $\geq 1.00D$ . Anecdotally, most are fitted into monovision with soft toric lenses and only a few practitioners are brave enough to try a soft toric multifocal design due to limited success. Duette Progressive provides an excellent opportunity to provide superior visual performance for all astigmatic presbyopes who have cylinders greater than  $-0.75D$ .

Research supports that: 45 per cent of pre and post-presbyopic patients have astigmatism of  $-0.75D$  or more; and that 15 per cent of pre- and post-presbyopic patients have astigmatism of  $-1.25D$  or more. Tear lens optics ensures Duette Progressive lenses correct corneal cylinders with 100 per cent accuracy and without the rotational challenges associated with soft torics, enabling patient and practitioner to simply focus on the presbyopic vision correction.

**PROGRESSIVE ENHANCEMENTS**

The Duette Progressive Centre Distance (CD) with FlexOptics Technology recognises that all eyes are different and that pupil sizes vary. By offering hybrid contact lenses that are customisable for presbyopia, even for

those patients with astigmatism, all eventualities can be covered. The existing Centre Near (CN) design offers the presbyope clear vision at all distances, however, some patients would benefit from a CD design or a combination thereof.

The key features and benefits of Duette Progressive are:

- Intuitive fitting approach provides high performance vision for astigmatic presbyopes
- Uncompromised GP optics ensuring: astigmatism is fully corrected enabling the practitioner (and their patient) to focus on the progressive performance
- A seamless progression of power from distance to near or near to distance
- CD design for early presbyopes available in a wide range of add powers
- CN design in three add powers for advanced presbyopes

The new addition to the Duette Progressive range has proprietary CD FlexOptics technology. The CD zone size is completely adjustable, ranging from 1.8mm to 4.0mm in 0.1mm steps. The add powers can also be configured from  $+0.75$  to  $+5.00D$  in 0.25D steps. The Duette Progressive range offers customisable base curves for the RGP portion in 0.1mm steps, along with a range of silicone hydrogel skirts to fit most eyes.

Whilst this lens has a vast array of parameters, it is simply fitted empirically. The ‘wow factor’ of putting a lens onto a patient’s eye that will give them instant comfort and clarity of vision at all distances, cannot be underestimated. With no need to worry about correcting the cyl, Duette Progressive is easy to fit using the same empirical fitting procedure as single vision Duette with the addition of: measuring the photopic pupil size; selecting CD or CN dependent on the add power.



Duette Progressive, ‘Contact Lens Product of the Year’

SynergEyes UK emphasises that the unique combination of customisable base curves, add powers and centre distance zone sizes, driven by photopic pupil size, provide contact lenses to meet almost all presbyopic needs.

**DIFFERENTIATE YOUR PRACTICE**

It is disappointing in the 21st century that, when it comes to contact lenses, for many practitioners monovision is still seen as the most effective way to correct an astigmatic presbyope. This is understandable when you take into account the additional cost of increased chair time, with little guarantee of success, when fitting soft toric multifocal lenses.

Having a bespoke lens, but one that is ordered empirically, means SynergEyes can cater for almost any presbyopic corneal astigmat without the chair time and drop-out often associated with fitting complex toric multifocals. It is also a great opportunity for practitioners to differentiate their practice to reach more people; thus, growing their business whilst at the same time enhancing their profile in the local community.

Duette Progressive is not available on the internet. Additionally, with the patient understanding that this is a specialist lens, their perception of the practitioner and practice is enhanced, making them strong advocates and walking ambassadors who will happily refer friends and family.

Duette lenses’ ‘best of both worlds’ approach, combining the visual performance of an RGP lens with the comfort of a soft lens, makes them a powerful tool in the armoury of the modern contact lens fitter in regular High Street contact lens practice. With the lenses utilising empirical fitting and adopting similar evaluation techniques to soft lenses, they can be easy to fit and a useful alternative to oblique and higher cyl powered soft torics, especially when combined with a progressive/multifocal design for patients who are also presbyopic.

Differentiation is a buzzword these days and offering a product that solves problems for patients who may have struggled with other means of correcting their vision can only help to raise the practice and practitioner’s profile. As dispensing optician, Darcie Richman, says: “I just love Duette Progressives. I had given up ever wearing contact lenses but my Duettes are a game changer. So comfortable and vision is amazing; so easy to get in and out too. Simply the best.”

*Phil Thompson FBDO CL is professional services lead at SynergEyes UK.*

# Mercury is rising

NEG members can now take advantage of an upgraded Business Assist service from Xact



Xact's services are tailored to the sector

**Our partners the Xact Group have been delivering a range of health and safety (H&S), human resources (HR) and employment law services to independent optical businesses for more than 10 years, and their services are always tailored specifically to the sector. The group has recently launched its new online service delivery platform, Mercury, and it has agreed to provide all NEG members access to the upgraded Business Assist service.**

## UPGRADED BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Business Assist offers a simple and cost-effective approach to managing H&S, HR and employment law compliance. It is designed to provide independent optical businesses with a robust and proactive service enabling them to minimise their risk of claims and disputes.

Members will be provided with:

- Unlimited access to their optical sector specific web portal
- Access to online HR management software, including specimen letters on all aspects of employment and termination, policies, sector specific contracts, employee handbooks and detailed guidance notes on all aspects of

HR and employment law compliance.

- There are also additional sections on recruitment, equal opportunities, grievance and disciplinary and termination
- Online H&S assistance including the full range of sector specific risk assessments with guidance notes on how to complete them, detailed specimen action plans for each topic and additional sections on food safety and work equipment
  - The website is supported by a business hours helpline
  - On-going support: the alerts service highlights forthcoming changes in legislation and approved codes of practice. The website is continuously updated to reflect changes in current legislation and best practice to ensure compliance at all times and the introduction of new legislation will always be highlighted in advance

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Further H&S, HR and employment law support services are also available to NEG members. In support of the free Business Assist service, Xact provides members with a range of further support services. In the area of H&S, Xact will act as your external competent person and they will:

- Complete: all H&S policies and procedures; and all H&S risk assessments in conjunction with the Responsible Person
- Provide access to the Responsible Person to their e-learning system managing H&S course
- Provide the advice needed to comply, including control measures and action plans
- All H&S policies, risk assessments and action plans are contained within their online interactive platform, Mercury
- Conduct regular audits (off and on site) of progress towards full compliance
- Provide: attendance at your premises in the event of any serious accident or incident; and liaison with local authorities on any issues on inspections
- Provide an indemnity for costs arising out of a health & safety prosecution

In the area of HR and employment law, Xact will act as your external HR department.

- The company will prepare: contracts of employment; employee handbooks; and job descriptions and ensure that they are kept up-to-date
- Provide: a named advisor – your external HR manager; help and assistance in dealing with detailed issues relating to the employment of staff including grievance, disciplinary, absence, TUPE, redundancy and termination; advice in writing; 24/7 cover; and an indemnity for costs and awards arising out of an employment tribunal
- All contracts, handbooks, advice provided and case files will be contained within their online interactive platform Mercury

In the key aspect of training, Xact offers a full suite of general H&S and HR e-learning courses. However, in line with its sector specific approach, the company offers the following job specific e-learning courses:

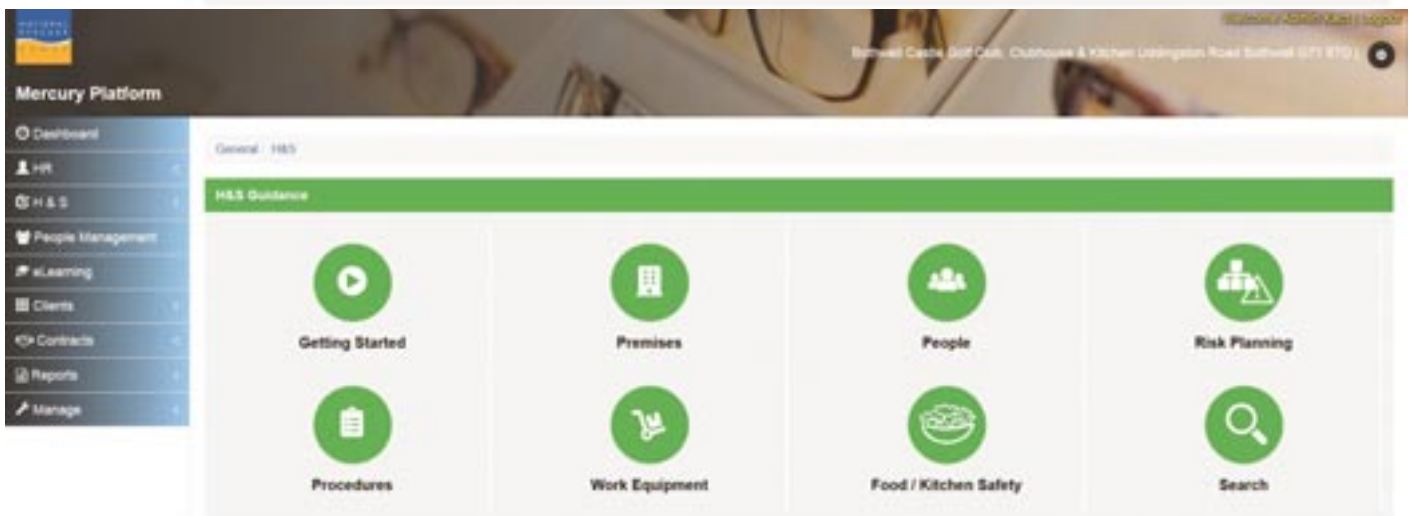
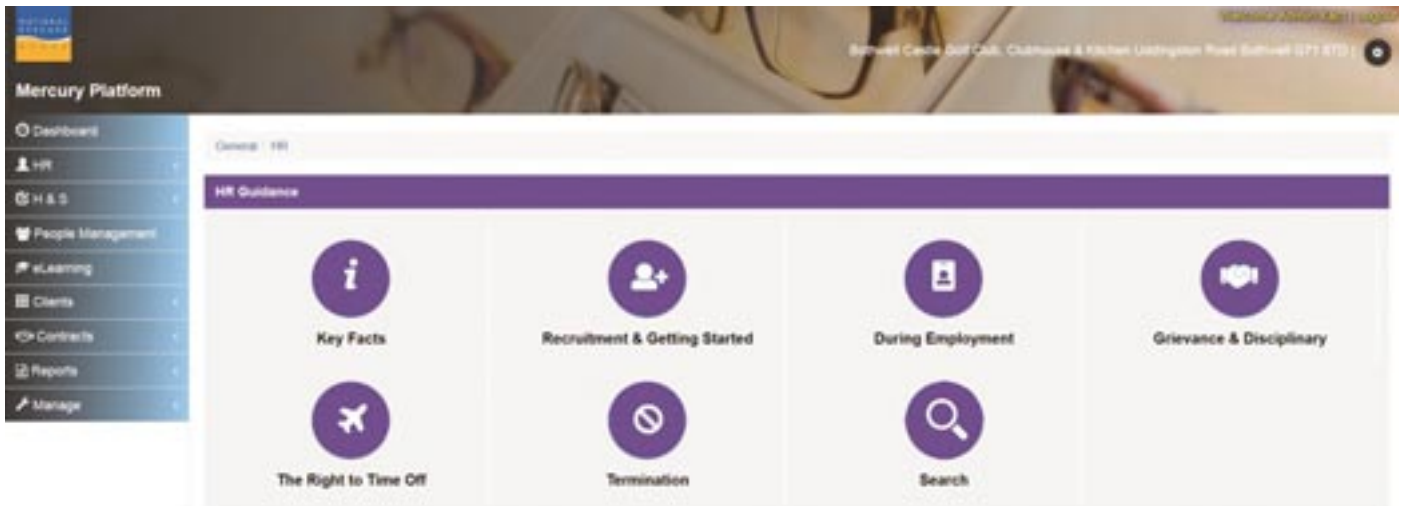
- Opticians Surgical Safety
- Opticians Laboratory Activities
- Opticians Retail Safety Essentials

The e-learning system is very easy to use and is supported by a sophisticated management dashboard, which facilitates the issue and ongoing management of the e-learning programme for employees.

*The new service launched in April and NEG members will have received an email containing their password and detailed user instructions. To find out more about the new service and the further additional support services contact: Iain McGleish on 01698 574655 or email [Imcgleish@xact.uk.com](mailto:Imcgleish@xact.uk.com)*



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# Myopia boom in children predicted

New statistics suggest 500 million children will be myopic by 2050, a rise of 200 million on current figures



Campaign supporter, Professor Brian Cox

Clearly, a global charity tackling the issue of poor vision, has highlighted the dramatic rise of myopia among children around the world, with figures set to increase from an already worrying 300 million children today to 500 million by 2050. Current levels of myopia in children is affecting the potential of the human race and this will only become worse as myopia continues to rise.

The announcement in March at Sightgeist, a global conference organised by Clearly, which featured guest speakers including Professor Brian Cox, revealed the huge inequality in the delivery of vision correction and eye treatment across the world. Uncorrected vision is already the largest unaddressed disability in the world – with 2.5 billion people suffering globally. According to the Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI), half the world may be myopic by 2050, with many sufferers set to go untreated throughout their life thanks to poor access to sight screenings and affordable glasses, among other factors.

It is predicted that myopia would rise considerably in China by 2050, with 65.7 per cent (120 million) of Chinese children suffering – a rise of almost 20 per cent from the predicted figure for 2020 (46.9 per cent). Japan would be another country with high levels of myopia, with 61.7 per cent of children predicted to be myopic by 2050. Mexico would see the largest increase in myopia prevalence in school aged children, with figures rising from 37 per cent in 2020 to 59 per cent in 2050. India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh would all see double digit increases in prevalence over the course of three decades.

## “GOALS WILL GO UNMET”

Clearly, which was established in 2016 by James Chen, has been working to tackle the global challenge of untreated poor vision and hosted Sightgeist at the Science



June Sarpong, Professor Cox and James Chen at the Science Museum event

Museum in London as the next significant step on the journey to solve the issue. James Chen, founder of Clearly, said: “Almost 700 years after glasses were first invented, it is astonishing that a third of the world still cannot see clearly.

“Poor vision has a devastating impact on quality of life: children can’t see the blackboard, workers can’t reach their full potential, and countless lives are put at risk as drivers get behind the wheel without being able to see properly. Many of the world’s sustainable development goals will not be reached unless we first provide vision for everyone, everywhere. Unless we act now, the numbers of people with poor vision, especially children, will grow and grow. But if businesses and governments throughout the world took this issue seriously, we could make a profound impact on countless lives.”

By 2050, the BHVI estimates that nearly half of the world’s population will suffer from myopia, including children whose myopia has been brought about by a lack of time spent outdoors and the over-reliance on ‘near-based’ activities, such as gaming, homework and reading from books, computers and phone screens. Vision

campaigners point out that the sustainable development goals cannot be met if a quarter of the school-age population, and up to half of the adult population, is suffering from untreated poor vision.

Goal four of the sustainable development goals is a commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. It is a central pillar of the success of other sustainable development goals including gender equality and decent work. Untreated poor vision – including myopia, presbyopia and hyperopia – costs the global economy an estimated \$3 trillion annually in health costs and lost productivity.

A study commissioned by Clearly last year highlighted the dramatic productivity loss from poor vision among agricultural labourers; providing glasses led to an average productivity increase of 22 per cent in labour productivity in a randomised controlled trial of tea workers in Assam, India. Clearly’s new research is published ahead of the World Health Organisation’s World Report on Vision, set to be published later this year.

Article provided by Clearly, <https://clearly.world>

# Jubilee events: optical anniversaries

By Joan Grady

Notable milestones in life – birthdays, wedding anniversaries and graduations – are all frequently celebrated with festivities to mark them as special and memorable occasions. This year, four independent, stylish and smart eyewear brands in four different countries observe their impressive and meaningful dates. From 10-year achievements to an enduring centennial, companies in Austria, America, France and the UK herald their triumphant success stories in eyewear.

## ROLF SPECTACLES, TYROL AUSTRIA

September 2019 officially marks the 10th appearance of Rolf Spectacles at Silmo in Paris. The founding team – Roland Wolf and his brother Christian, Mary Lijazovic and her brother Martin – presented visionary frames in wood, crafted from splendid trees in their home region of the Tyrol. The buzz was instant. Everybody was soon talking about the handmade designs in various woods – a feat that requires remarkable and profound skill to achieve successful and captivating frames.

At their very first Silmo, Rolf Spectacles won a Silmo d'Or. Fast-forward 10 years, and they have amassed more Silmo awards plus several prestigious Red Dot trophies, along with design distinction awards throughout Europe and Australia.



Handcrafted wood design by Rolf Spectacles



The Rolf boutique in Vienna, an original wood building on the Franziskanerplatz

The Rolf team is enamoured and fascinated with cars and the wood collection is energised by, and named after, vintage automobiles. As the collection developed, Rolf added stone frames, crafted with unique innovative finishes. Next came a new metier, Monoceros, frames superbly crafted from a single piece of eco-friendly buffalo horn, with streamlined designs that are timelessly elegant.

Always a brand to explore and evolve beyond barriers to possibilities, Rolf launched the Titanium Skyline Collection that includes optical and sunglass designs. Combining innovative technologies, including 3D printing processes, the Skyline collection

radiates futuristic minimalism unified with traditional spectacle production requirements.

Rolf has also opened two shops – a charming boutique in Vienna, surrounded by Viennese landmarks, including Kleines, the celebrated Vienna Café. With Rolf's love of cars, when an empty petrol station became available in the village of Ruetz in the Tyrol, the Rolf team envisioned the premises as a boutique with a special atmosphere – and indeed, it is. More new and dramatic concepts from Rolf will be unveiled at Silmo this autumn.

## L.A.EYEWORKS, LOS ANGELES, USA

September also honours the 40th anniversary since Barbara McReynolds and Gai Gheradi opened their optical boutique in Los Angeles, and started to create their own designs. Barbara and Gai were among the early eyewear pioneers who understood that frames were concepts and entities of design and desire. On a trip to Paris, they discovered Alain Mikli, and conveyed the entire collection in their suitcases back to California. They envisioned the boutique as a showcase for emerging designers as well as international brands – a tradition that carries on today.



Rolf Spectacles' Titanium Skyline Collection



Creative colourations by I.a.eyeworks

Barbara and Gai's philosophy is to create eyewear that is iconoclastic, unique, colourful and plentiful with unexpected textures and details. Their concept from the very beginning was to bring excitement to eyewear, as they creatively explored unusual, bold colours for frames. Unique shapes, with embellished and textured finishes add character and individuality to I.a.eyeworks' designs.

The first I.a.eyeworks advertising campaign tag line was, 'A face is like a work of art. It deserves a great frame' – and still features today in the brand's photos. The latest collection is an impressive medley of materials, including HD acetate, stainless steel, acetate and titanium, expressing powerful and emboldened colourations.

Always keen for optical expression, the visual innovators highlight optical cleaning cloths with contemporary and inventive designs from internationally acclaimed artists, including Jeffrey Vallance, Catherine Opie, Alison Saar and Huntley Muir among others. The concept is that the designers view the utilitarian cleaning cloth as a blank canvas, with provocative, imaginative and even political connotations. Forty years on, the enterprising and imaginative founders of I.a.eyeworks continue their spirited approach to eyewear with boundless enthusiasm for statement frames.

**LAFONT PARIS, FRANCE**

For three generations, Lafont Paris has been at the forefront of optics. The family legacy began with a small optical boutique opening



Cleaning cloth by California artist Jeffrey Vallance for I.a.eyeworks



Lafont Boutique on rue Vignon near Place Madeleine Paris

in 1923, near elegant Place Madeleine. Family members continue the tradition, and nowadays Matthieu Lafont is at the helm of the House of Lafont, and his brother Thomas is chief creative director and designer.

This autumn marks the 40th anniversary since Lafont started creating distinctive handmade eyewear crafted in France, and distributed worldwide. Lafont has achieved the prestigious certification OFG (Guaranteed French Origin) that applies to the complete acetate collection, and endorses their leadership in French eyewear. Superbly stylish designs in select materials are made within high-tech French manufacturing guidelines.

Sunglasses and optical designs for men and women are a balanced nuance of French understated chic. Retro and Art Deco concepts feature in the frames, as well as sleek cat-eye shapes and round silhouettes. Women particularly appreciate Lafont designs, as the shapes frequently give the appearance of volume, but are suitably scaled for smaller faces. The children's frames take a playful, whimsical approach with appealing colours for the young set.

Through the decades, Lafont has also opened additional boutiques in Paris, as well as in Rouen, the historical port on the



Art Deco influences by Lafont



Playful and fun: ABC by Lafont for children

River Seine. The first Lafont Atelier, where clients can choose their own bespoke frame, is tucked away in the original horse stalls behind the boutique on Rue Vignon, where the Lafont heritage began.

**KIRK & KIRK, UK**

Kirk & Kirk salutes the centennial of the British brand with striking new designs in the Centena Collection. The Kirk family has a 100-year narrative in British optics, and Jason and Karen Kirk are the brand's guiding force into the future.



The Centena Collection by Kirk & Kirk: Bert in Corn

To mark the occasion, Kirk & Kirk has launched exquisite frames that are bold, strong and confident – crafted like sculptures in ultra light 10mm acrylic. Stunning colours, including luminous Royal, Corn, Walnut, Crimson, Iris, Tiger, Jade and Crystal, all ensure fashion elegance. The Kirk duo embrace the philosophy that eyewear is created to be worn – and brings a positive confidence and enjoyment to the wearer.

Nowadays, customers are more conscious of what they buy, and seek fine quality materials and authenticity. Selecting brands with history, recognition for value and durability, plus fashionable style, are characteristics that enhance independent opticians' potential for growth and success – and the opportunity to create and celebrate business milestones.



Esme in lustrous Jade acrylic from the Centena Collection by Kirk & Kirk



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