John Bruce Hamilton

an outstanding tasmanian ophthalmologist
Born in Hobart 1901, John Bruce Hamilton studied medicine in Sydney and pursued postgraduate studies at Oxford 1929.

He returned to Hobart becoming one of Australia’s most respected ophthalmologists marrying Dora Grant in 1943. They had two children, John and Elizabeth.

During his career he made a significant contribution to genetics and the medical literature while also serving in the army.
In 1931 JBH was appointed honorary ophthalmologist to the Tasmanian Institute for the Blind and Deaf and in 1932 he set up the first sight-saving class in Australia.

In 1940 it became Australia’s first Sight-Saving School.

After his passing in 1968, the school was renamed the Bruce Hamilton School.

This impressive database formed the basis of modern genetic work still being carried out today.

Family Pedigree of Leber’s Disease, The Significance of Heredity in Ophthalmology – A Tasmanian Survey
Throughout his career, JBH made a significant contribution to the medical literature between 1930 to 1960.

Some of his more notable findings include the importance of sarcoidosis and toxoplasmosis in ophthalmology, the first report of the benign retinopathy caused by maternal rubella, the incidences of eye disease and the importance of genetics.

In 1943 he published “A new Conception of Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca”, a translation of an original monograph by Sjogren.

His book, “A Guide to Ophthalmic Surgery”, was considered the gold standard of its time.

**Books**


In 1941 JBH was appointed major in the Australian Imperial Force. He served in the Middle East as ophthalmic surgeon in the 2nd/7th Australian General Hospital Australian Imperial Forces for three years.

He earned the nickname “Lookie” after saying “look to me” during examinations and was famously known for keeping a wardrobe in his tent in the midst of war.

During the war he wrote “The War and Ophthalmology” and “The Incidence of Eye Disease in the Australian Imperial Forces, Middle East”. He oddly found a lower prevalence of eye disease, including traumatic, in the war population.
In 1954, with his wife, JBH constructed the Bligh Museum of Pacific Exploration.

The foundation stone was laid on the 200th anniversary of Captain William Bligh’s birth on the 9th of September.

To this day it remains open as a private museum showcasing artefacts, maps and articles relating to Pacific exploration.

Opening of the Bligh Museum 1954
John Bruce Hamilton became ill in Rome while traveling with his wife in Europe and Asia from cardiovascular disease.

He returned home and passed away on Thursday, 11th of April 1968.