

## Editorial

As was alluded to in the January issue, at the end of last year Neil Weir vacated the position of senior editor at *The Journal of Laryngology & Otology*, a post that he held with distinction for 12 years. During that time he made many changes. These have included supervising the move to RSM Press as our publishers as well as overseeing the introduction of the new web site and of our online manuscript submission system, which has become fully operational within the last few months and which is already proving a big success.

Neil trained in medicine at the Westminster Hospital and subsequently undertook Junior hospital posts in Otolaryngology at St Thomas's Hospital and at the Royal Free, where he trained under Ian Robin and John Groves as well as with John Ballantyne – who has remained a constant friend and supporter ever since. In 1978 he was appointed to a Consultant post in Guildford where, with David Wright, he developed a unit which was to become one of the most sought-after places for Registrar training in the South East of England. Specializing in Otology, he also became Honorary Consultant Otologist to Atkinson Morley's Hospital in 1987 and editor of *The Journal of Laryngology & Otology* on the retirement of John Booth in 1992. In addition to this he was President of the Sections of Otology and of the History of Medicine at the Royal Society of Medicine between 2001 and 2002 and was one of the Vice Presidents of the Royal Society of Medicine until last year. He is also a Knight of Magisterial Grace of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and in 1998 was appointed Chairman of the Livery Committee at the Society of Apothecaries, for whom he organised a river trip to celebrate the millennium. Celebrations included the late Roger Parker, who was Master, together with the Junior and Senior wardens being rowed up river from Battersea to Chelsea in traditional, heavy wooden rowing boats.

These facts disguise many other facets of Neil's life, which has been truly eclectic in ways many of us might aspire to – but will never achieve. On appointment in Surrey he bought a nearly derelict house and spent the next 24 years transforming it, with considerable style, into a gentleman's residence. The same artistic flair and skill in renovation also allowed him to buy and restore a house on the South Bank in London and, latterly, to refurbish 2 West Road in Guildford. The West Road house has for many years been his consulting rooms and was, as many readers will doubtless be aware, also the registered office of the *Journal* for a considerable



NEIL WEIR

period. The same skills transferred to the new Royal Surrey County Hospital where he took command of the decoration and fittings of the new chapel employing some of the best craftsmen and artists of the day. The terracotta Madonna and Child was sculpted by his friend and Past President of the Society of Portrait Sculptors – Sheila Mitchell – and the tapestries were designed by John Piper, whose initial contribution was dismissed by Neil who told him, in characteristically forthright terms, 'I don't like it, do it again'. Neil has sculpted many important and illustrious members of the profession and has been a considerable contributor for many years to the Medical Art Society – as well as being its President for three years.

A holiday in Nepal in 1987 led to a chance meeting with Dr L N Prasad, the Senior ENT Surgeon in Kathmandu. At his invitation Neil returned the following year with his then senior registrar, Steve

Metcalf, and learned more about the extensive problem of deafness and ear disease in Nepal. The result of this visit was the formation of the Britain-Nepal Otology Service (BRINOS), with the aim of assisting the then very few Nepalese ENT surgeons to reach out to people in the far eastern and western ends of the country by holding 'ear surgery camps'. With a joint team, which included Neil's wife, Sue, the first camp was held in Pokhara in March 1989. These twice-yearly camps have enabled patients without access to Kathmandu to undergo middle ear surgery. In recent years the programme has concentrated around the town of Nepalgunj in the West of Nepal, with the 29th Camp scheduled for March 2005. In the past four years a 'Primary Ear Care Programme' has also been established through BRINOS and the Swiss Red Cross, which has become a model for the development of otological services in rural communities in the developing world. To date, 85 individual British surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses have taken part in the camps – some several times over – and have treated 25 800 patients and performed 3130 operations. The programme that he has initiated has focused on disease prevention, community education, early

detection of deafness and hearing aid provision. In recognition of his work, Neil was awarded the Prabal Gorkha Bakshin Bahu medal by the late King Birendra of Nepal in 2000.

Neil wrote *Otolaryngology – an Illustrated History* in 1990, for which he was awarded the prestigious George Davey Howells Memorial Prize from the University of London. His interest in the History of Medicine continues. He is the current President of the British Society for the History of ENT and is presently editing a history-based supplement for the *Journal* which, we trust, will be in print in the near future. He maintains a close interest in the sea and has recently moved from sail to motor power – taking delivery, in the recent past, of a new 31-foot boat, which he helped to design and which is currently undergoing sea trials. His passion for opera, particularly Wagner, also remains. We hope that these pursuits will not detract from his ongoing interest in the *Journal*, to which he remains closely associated as Emeritus Editor and Chairman of JLO (1984) Ltd.

GUY KENYON & ROBIN YOUNGS  
EDITORS