Editorial

To be or not to be?
Some explanation and apology for the late arrival of this number is due to our readers. For the past 3 years this journal has enjoyed generous sponsorship from commercial sources. This ceased in 1988 and in 1989 the society had to face the doubling of its subscription, which had not been raised for many years, to keep the journal going. The sum involved was not large, nevertheless there were murmurings that there would be large scale resignations and it might be the end of the society. The committee felt that the only way to gauge opinion was to have a referendum of all members of the society. This was done, but it took time to organise and assess, hence this February number is 3 months late and appears at the same time as the May number.

Questionnaires were sent out to all members of the society asking them if they would consent to a doubling of their subscription in order that the journal might continue, 70% of those who replied agreed to accept a rise in subscription and half of these volunteered to make a donation to provide ready finance. Only 4 members took the opportunity of resigning, two of whom had moved away from Bristol and one who was suffering from terminal illness. It must be said that only 40% of the questionnaires were returned, the editor found this disappointing, but those who know about these things said that this was a very good response, especially as no prepaid envelope had accompanied the questionnaire.

Here was a clear mandate to continue our journal. But there is more good news. The general airing of our problems has also brought us a new sponsor, The Nuffield Nursing Home Trust has now offered us generous financial support and we are back on the road again.

Perhaps the most important result of this period of self examination is the feeling that this journal which has, since its inception more than 100 years ago, aimed to be the ‘medical journal of the south west’ and has for the past three years been distributed to all doctors in the West of England, should now attempt to become a genuine West of England Medical Journal. If this is to succeed our society must ally itself with other West of England medical societies and specialist clubs and form a genuine partnership. An approach is being made to all these societies and together, with the approval and assistance of our new sponsors, we have hopes of launching in 1990, on a firm footing, a new West of England Medical Journal.

To return to our question and the musings of Hamlet. We have here ‘an enterprise of great pith and moment’, we must not let its ‘currents turn awry and lose the name of action.’

The Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Society

The Society invites doctors in the Bristol area to join, and reminds existing members of the need for regular recruitment and asks them to invite colleagues who they think would enjoy membership.

The society was founded in 1874 with fifty members. Regular meetings have been held ever since without interruption by two world wars. Initially, as now, papers were given, there were discussions on chosen themes and case presentations. From its inception the society has been a ‘club’ at which doctors from Bristol and the surrounding area could meet together, it formed a bond between doctors in general practice, hospital doctors, doctors in the public services and others. This is still the most important function of the society. In the early days it was perhaps the main source of postgraduate education, nowadays there are meetings, conferences and courses on all subjects aplenty and the Postgraduate Centres are a constant source of further education. Accordingly meetings of the society are designed less to educate than to interest, and speakers well known in other fields are invited. The social aspect is enhanced by a buffet supper. Most of the meetings are held in the postgraduate centres, but there are also visits with clinical meetings at local hospitals or to local places of interest. New members are usually recruited by existing members, but any doctor wishing to join who does not know who to approach should write to the Hon. Secretary, Mr Roger Baird, 23 Old Sneed Park, Bristol BS9 1RG who will be glad to find a proposer. The society is particularly glad to welcome young members.