I t is not usually a welcome experience to find yourself in hospital, but if the situation arises then patients need to know that everything possible is being done for them.

They may not realise it, but there is a company with some 65 years’ experience that has been providing the world of health care with first rate support for an element of that time. Most of us would regard assistance in a hospital as meaning something to do with the medicines or potions that help out the professionals who treat us. However, Brandon Medical Ltd offers something else. It is a company that literally throws light on an operation.

If you were in a hospital theatre where a surgeon was carrying out work with scalpel and sutures, then having a clearly lit arena would be very important for all concerned. That is where this company comes in with its wide range of operating theatre lamps, as well as an array of supporting hardware such as audio-visual systems, lighting panels, close quarter lighting and more intimate examination lights.

The company began life just after the last war as a motor rewind firm, before progressing into transformer manufacture. It was founded by Joseph Cameron and son Cyril, with much of the work at the time being contract based. In the earlier days, a small part of the work involved making medical equipment such as the dramatically named Sharman Portable Kymographic Tubal Insufflation Apparatus.

This machine was used in sterility clinics, but further detail than that is not required here. The company also developed something called a Snow Pencil that involved

Brandon Medical
A shining light in health care

Left: Eric Hall, father of Graeme and Adrian. He acquired the business more than 20 years ago.
using a tube powered by a CO2 Sparklets bulb to eradicate skin blemishes. However, it was the firm’s development of the Oxford Speclite that helped encourage it to move into the production of medical lighting supplies in a big way.

The Speclite was originally produced at the instigation of the Oxford Hospital Board and was designed to provide the facilities for visually examining infusion fluids in glass or plastic containers. By then, Eric Hall and son Graeme had taken over the ailing Brandon Engineering Ltd, gaining control in 1993 and turning it into Brandon Medical. Included in the workforce was a certain Alan Portrey, an employee who would complete 40 years’ service in 2014. He was just one of the original factory staff who were regarded as very important by the new owners in maintaining production standards and in developing the business along new lines. The Halls were joined by Graeme’s brother, Adrian, in 1995 as the company was stabilised and basic systems for quality and management introduced.

By now, as Brandon Medical, the firm was successful in winning two SMART awards that helped fund new technological development that led to the production of the Galaxy Ultra range of operating lights. The formal rebranding from an engineering concern to a medical devices’ company was completed in 1996. The following year saw Graeme win a major Manufacturing Managers’ award for rescuing the Brandon business and Adrian was at the forefront in leading a consortium that won the contract to rebuild hospitals in Bosnia.

The company was going from strength to strength and the century was coming to an end as the Halls secured their biggest ever single order when supplying the operating theatre control panels in the internationally renowned King Abdullah Hospital near Ar Ramtha, Jordan. Further awards for its optical systems for operating lights were to follow and a new series of Galaxy mobile operating lights were introduced in 2004.

About the same time, Brandon brought out an expanded range of Coolview examination lights, the Amadea bed-head lamps and a new set of UPS units. This was now a company firmly established as a major player in its field, having also benefited from a move to new premises a year into the present century. A new design lab was then added and staff appointed to integrate aesthetic considerations with the practicality and efficiency of the products being manufactured.

In 2005, the first version of a video system was launched. This would lead to the development of Symposia, a digital media communication package designed specifically for healthcare. The first major installation of Symposia occurred at Liverpool University.

Closer to home, the Seacroft Hospital makes important use of a Brandon product. The hospital is the largest NHS based IVF facility in the country and a specially designed embryo cell safety light was designed for use here. Visible blue light is harmful to certain embryonic cells, but Brandon was able to come up with a high definition LED spectrum light source that filtered out dangerous wavelengths, resulting in a cell safe light that eliminated the danger of ‘blue light toxicity’. Not surprisingly, this innovation meant that the company was given the coveted European Elektra Award in 2009.

By now the Brandon name was so well known that the company was approached by Sony to act as a ‘dealer’ for its healthcare package designed specifically for healthcare. The first major installation of Symposia occurred at Liverpool University.

Below: Adrian Hall at the British Embassy in Sarajevo soon after it opened after the end of hostilities. Brandon Medical held talks at the embassy on the best way to co-operate with the Ministry of Health in Bosnia to refit 13 hospitals in Bosnia after the company had won an international tender.
products and a deal was struck that resulted in the supply of medical monitors, printers, recorders and a variety of other peripherals and consumables. Further awards came the company’s way, including the immensely prestigious 2011 Queen’s Award for Enterprise in the Innovation Category. Further expansion of the product range of HD-LED equipment helped push forward the need to move home again. So, in 2013, Brandon Medical moved to a state of the art site in Morley where it could now double its operating capacity.

It now introduced the Quasar eLite, an advanced operating theatre light system that produces an unrivalled picture quality on large monitors. The new premises were officially opened on July 9th, 2014, by the Princess Royal, a sure sign of the standing to which Brandon Medical had risen.

The company can be said to be on a mission in that it wants its clients to regard it as being the first port of call when looking for a supplier to meet their needs. To this end, it aims to provide desirable, innovative and high value products, but ones that are not delivered in a cold, impersonal manner. The ‘hands-on’ service has always been important and has helped establish a reputation as a business that supplies an after sales service that is just as important as that delivered at the front end of a deal. It is not just the product that is of concern, because Brandon sees itself as also offering support to medical staff, healthcare engineers and distributors in delivering a better patient care package. In addition, a large number of veterinary practices and animal sanctuaries rely on Brandon lighting in their surgeries, laboratories and medical rooms.

The company does not just deliver and install its equipment as it also ensures that customers are given appropriate training and education to assist them carry out their work to the highest possible standards. There is an ethical element to all this as Brandon holds with so-called old fashioned values of integrity and honesty, whilst all the time regarding customers and clients as partners.

Doing things in hospital the Brandon way has meant considerable changes to the concept the general public once had of the way in which teaching hospitals work. People brought up on ‘Emergency Ward 10’ might still imagine that students learn by watching surgeons and then practising what they have observed on live patients! That process has long been consigned to history as now trainee doctors can follow everything from a safe uncontaminated distance, but thanks to our modern digital world everything is integrated into a system. This enables observation from a safe, remote place, but it appears to those watching that they are at the surgeon’s elbow.

Brandon Medical had a turnover of £500,000 in 1993, but this has risen to over £5 million today and is still growing. The Hall brothers, now co-managing directors, have bold ambitions to quadruple the company in size by the early 2020s and are planning steady development in Far East markets. Closer to home, keep an eye out for its lights as used in operating theatres and medical centres in TV and movie dramas. The sets have to be realistic and what better way is there of achieving this realism than by using the best form of lighting to be had?

‘Brilliant by design’ is the Brandon slogan and one that is reflected in every aspect of its being.
HRH The Princess Royal visited Brandon Medical in July, 2014. The visit marked the official opening of the company’s new premises in Morley - a facility which has more than doubled its operating capacity. The Princess was invited to try out Brandon’s impressive portfolio of products in the state-of-the-art visitor centre followed by a tour of the factory and the unveiling of a plaque. It was the second royal honour for Brandon Medical. In 2011, the company received the Queen’s award for Enterprise in the Innovation Category, possibly the most prestigious award possible in its field.