

JARROW – PARLIAMENT
16 AUGUST – 6 SEPTEMBER

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PEOPLE'S MARCH FOR THE NHS

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* Dates displayed above are leaving dates of each town - various events & rallies are scheduled on arrival of the march in each town (the night before the dates shown, except Jarrow where the rally will take place on the 16/08 at the start of the march). Please check the website for a complete itinerary.

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Reflections from the March

Rajan Madhok

2014

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Going on the March

“I am going to walk for the 999 Call for the NHS and I am going all the way.

The answer to the obvious question of why is simple: because I want to and I need to. I am not happy with the way things are in the NHS: Midstaffs scandal and the recent treatment of whistle-blowers, for example, are a manifestation of the deeper underlying problems of pursuit of ideology despite mounting evidence to the contrary, abuse of power, and loss of direction and accountability, and are an affront to our values of dignity, respect and fairness.

When coupled with the Health and Social Care Act, the PFI initiative and obsessive introductions of markets (just to make it clear I am not totally against markets/choice) it seems to me that the NHS I chose (I am originally from India and came here because of the fundamental principles of universal, free at point of need health care) may not be there for much longer, unless we act. I am not making any political points because in my experience since Thatcher introduced ‘Internal Markets’ in the late 1980s, the direction of travel has been maintained and recently accelerated. In fact, political parties so far have tended to abuse the NHS when in power and use it in opposition. We need to put a stop to it- for our sake and the sake of future generations.

Just when the NHS is seen as the best health system in the developed world we seem hell bent to destroy it – why?

Remember that saying attributed to Edmund Burke: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing”. And to use another one: “If not now, then when; and if not you, then who?” We need to rise to the challenge and do whatever we can to save this cherished institution. Whether it will make a difference is not the issue for me. I do not need to be reminded that millions marched against Iraq War but Tony Blair forced it through. That only confirms that people get the governments they deserve, and to quote Churchill: “It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried”.

Leading up to 2015 elections we have an opportunity to create a new form of governance (if not government) and force a cross-party unified approach to the NHS (and not the political football); no future government should be allowed to renege on their promises – remember there will be no top down reorganisation of the NHS!

If these Darlington mums can do it, why not us. Come on, it is good for the NHS, the soul, and the body – all that exercise!”

Having thus committed I set off on 15 August 2014 on this epic march. The following is a compilation of the daily blog I wrote then.

Setting off: Home to Jarrow

Finally, the day is here. Will be setting off to start the march tomorrow. Apart from the trepidation due to the physical aspects of the Jarrow march - my poor feet! - I am also trying to make sense of things, and to make sure that I add value on this march. So, my blogs – and the current plan is to write daily – are partly thinking aloud, so please bear with me.

Going to Jarrow brings back memories of my time as the director of public health in South Tyneside (1994-98, my first Board job) and one of the best periods of my professional life; those were austere times and the economic reality focused our minds. South Tyneside with places like Jarrow reinforced my belief in the NHS and shaped my future public health and management career. I also met Tony Blair during that time, before he became the PM, and indeed wrote to him with my thoughts for the NHS where I had made three fundamental points:

- we need to look at health as a whole and not just health care and thus move from a National Illness Service to a truly National Health Service. This will require appropriate positioning of the NHS so that it holds the necessary pivotal position to influence other bodies which impact on health, both at the national and at the local level.
- we need to be clear about the big picture at the national level and about the big objectives. What the person at the coalface needs to know and do is very different to what the company boss needs to know and do - the level of detail must reflect position. Knowing everything at every level is impossible without immense bureaucracy and is counter-productive. Common goals, trust, shared power and empowerment, and flexibility are the desired characteristics.
- we could really benefit from increased funding although we acknowledge that there is not a bottomless pit. Some of the increased funding may come from giving up certain existing practices including administration, and from stopping the continual drive for increased efficiency based on quantity and shifting the emphasis to clinical effectiveness and quality. (The full paper is at page 215 of the Compendium).

I was quite pleased with the start of his administration, with explicit recognition of health inequalities and setting up of Health Action Zones, appointment of Tessa Jowell as the Public Health Minister, creation of NICE and CHI, and then increased funding. I was very mindful of the 'bed pans in Whitehall' problem with micromanagement of the NHS by politicians and was very keen to promote a new culture of working. But as history shows, sadly it was all too short-lived and started unravelling soon thereafter – was it because Tony Blair was 'Thatcher incarnate' anyway or the administration just did not have the patience or the political/management experience for the huge cultural change that was necessary? And it was not just the NHS, look at Iraq War, and which proves the point: "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". And since then the NHS has been on a roller coaster and currently seems to be plunging down.

So, we need to march to show our concerns, and to ensure a fair NHS for all. But, what is more taxing for me is what do I (we) want? Again, I have already written about this in my paper on management and leadership in the NHS (page 259 of the compendium, written in 2012): “If I was to name my main disappointments (with the NHS), then the biggest stumbling block has been the primary-secondary care (and some would argue health and social care) divide, and rather than find ways of bridging it, the consistent policy direction with emphasis on purchasing/commissioning has reinforced it. The second is the denial by politicians that the NHS is not affordable and has to set some limits; it cannot provide world class state of the art health care to everyone. Rationing has become a taboo word despite evidence, and lately increasing evidence, that some sort of rationing is already happening. Thirdly, I have been really pleased with some of the major developments such as the work of the NICE, NPSA, National Institute for Innovation and Improvement and National Service Frameworks, which have generated unprecedented, and unparalleled elsewhere, intellectual capital, but disappointed to see that we have failed to fully capitalise on this. Amongst other reasons, the failure of execution is partly to do with constant restructuring and resultant instability and partly to do with overall leadership. Finally, and the subject of this paper later, is the limited leadership by the doctors, for various reasons including the lack of career progression in medical management and the associated stresses of the roles with limited incentives. Rather than address these fundamental issues, the approach has been to find scapegoats and short term populist and diversionary (such as structural changes) solutions. I still believe that the NHS is a great system of delivering healthcare on a mass scale, but it does/can not provide best care to all- the individual vs population dilemma remains the weakest link. Let us stop claiming that NHS can provide world class services for everyone at all times – good enough is good enough.”

So where do we go? Going by some of the comments in the media, (some) people seem to be clear about what they want but are all their demands and expectations realistic and possible? What would a 21st century NHS look like? Do we have a (practical) blueprint for reconciling costs, quality and access? What would our NHS/health manifesto look like? I think that the last reorganisation has been a total shambles like its predecessors and, political parties have reinforced the ‘ideology of markets’ and are shifting the burden to the individual – the hard fought for Welfare State is dead. What we, therefore, need is a new concordat between the public and the politicians. For the record I am not against (appropriate and limited) private sector but am against the current extent and way of marketisation; I do not believe more money for the NHS alone is the answer; I want more emphasis on prevention and primary and community services – I am very disappointed with the treatment of the elderly, and children and mental health services; I want an NHS based on outcomes and a clearly defined basic package of care for all; and I also do not believe that preserving the status quo with unreformed hospitals and general practice- and stopping any 3 closures – is the way forward. And most of all I want a stop to constant restructuring, to ensure proper accountability and governance, and for both, staff and patients to be treated fairly, with respect and dignity. So, there you have it - my prejudices and preferences.

As we walk I am keen to hear from you about how you see things. I am hoping to learn and to explore how we can work together to keep the NHS. We need to find a common platform – ‘jaw-jaw not war-war’ approach to solving the NHS.

Finally, what is interesting about today (15 August) is that it happens to be the Independence Day for India and I am reminded of the speech – Tryst with Destiny - the First Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru gave on the birth of the nation in 1947: “Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. ...It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. “ And.... “The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman. We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. “ The full text can be seen on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tryst_with_Destiny

We could do well to remember the spirit of his speech – and take the solemn pledge to do our best to promote this worthy cause of ensuring affordable health care for all and to create a fit for purpose 21st century NHS. But, we have hard work ahead, indeed, and let there be no resting until we achieve our goal. Our politicians would also do well to read and practise the above last two paras of the speech quoted; I wonder who amongst them will be the new Nye Bevan?

It would be a tragedy if our fate is no better than that of the original Jarrow marchers who were given £1 rail fare to return home, whom the then Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin refused to meet, and who came back to the same hardships and only got a temporary reprieve after the war started. We must do better: We Can, We Will.

On a jolly note, I am looking forward to meeting some colleagues from the ‘old’ days (not old colleagues!) and let us see who wins: my will power (and my fitness/dieting 4 plan) or the generosity of the folk (who are going to feed me!). Weight 85 kg; BMI 24.8 (just under the healthy limit of 25, but then I am South Asian and perhaps need to be at 23?)- work to do, get walking! Rajan Madhok 15 August 2014

DECLARATION: I am walking in personal capacity and the views expressed are mine alone, and are meant to inform not criticise or insult. If you like them, tell others and if you do not, tell me- just kidding, but do help me with my prejudices/arrogance. I may be old but can still learn. Blogs available at www.leadershipforhealth.com

DAY 1: Jarrow to Chester le Street

On way now; had a great send off in Jarrow this morning with drummers and just arrived in Chester le Street. Stayed with Mavis (we used to work together in South Tyneside) and Donald last night, and she drove me around South Tyneside before the march – strange coming back after over 15 years. Ingham House which used to house the Gateshead and South Tyneside Health Authority is now a housing estate and the Marsden Rock –the famous seaside landmark - has lost its arch. So, times really have changed.

And they certainly have changed for the NHS, as speaker after speaker at the start of the march today pointed out – passionate speeches expressing great upset with the current state of the NHS with large scale and rapid marketisation, and more importantly frustration with the political process whereby the Government has managed to force through changes: “there was no mandate for the NHS changes, and if anything the people were told no more top down reorganisation of the NHS”!

So, they came out in droves, with dogs, pushing prams and in wheelchairs marching to save the NHS. Flummoxed the organisers who were not expecting to see so many of them giving up time at the weekend! As Vinny McHugh, 22 said “The NHS is the most important thing the country has done. You cannot let it be taken away without fighting” – so has left his job to march. A view echoed by Peter Chater, another young person and scientist who was marching for friends and family. It was heartening to see that it was not just ‘oldies’ like me – it was the young and the old joined by the common mission, and everyone wanting to do their best as a thank you to past generations who had handed us this cherished institution and as a duty to safeguard it for the future generations.

It was quite clear that the Coalition is not popular with this lot, and the Prime Minister personally caught a lot of ‘flak’, with accusations of crony capitalism. But surprisingly (or not) some people did question whether the alternative, Labour, could be trusted completely either. As Dr Helen Groom, my ‘old’ colleague, a GP back again in Gateshead, reminded me that when she was in Oxford many years ago there was the plan to outsource all of commissioning! She came to serve tea to us because “people need to understand what is happening to the NHS, and they need to stand up for the NHS”.

This was a mature crowd today, recognising the political and economic reality and not wanting to be used for short term populist advantages. They are in for the long haul, and deeply committed to the NHS. That is not the same as saying that there is clarity about what is needed; that will hopefully happen over the next 3 weeks, but there are signs that extreme positions: no closures at all or Labour is the saviour will be challenged. Just as there is recognition that money alone is not the answer, it needs to be coupled with reform.

All in all, a great start. Good humoured albeit serious discussions continued over dinner with the recognition that we needed to stay strong, not become ‘bitter’, find ways of informing and empowering people, and influence the policy makers.

Walking was made much more enjoyable as met up with many interesting people and especially Richard Thomson, Prof of Public Health, and my fellow public health trainee in 1988 when we both joined the training scheme and enrolled for our Masters in Community Medicine at the University of Newcastle.

Good exercise and brilliant dinner from the Chester le Street Methodist Church will ensure good night's sleep even though it is a long time I slept in a hall on the floor! But I guess compared to the original Jarrow marchers my hardship is minimal.

16 August 2014



With Helen Groom, Wendy Broderick, Mavis Gill and Richard Thomson

DAY 2: Chester le Street to Ferryhill

Passing 'Pity Me' village on way today, after another great send off, I could not help but wonder about the name- How did it come to be so named? My fellow walker explained the origin, and that it was a phonetic translation of the French Petit Mere! And we talked about other unusual place names like No Place, Once Brewed and Bearpark, and then we started talking about why we were marching. As it then turned out I had been talking to Alyson Learmonth, until two years Director of Public Health for Gateshead, and our paths had crossed in the past! and we started reminiscing and caught up on old friends and colleagues- what a great and pleasant surprise.

What was, however, not a surprise was that like myself and some other colleagues, Alyson was also marching to try and figure out how we ever get to this stage in the NHS? Surely as senior managers we could and should have done more/better to stop the rot. The loss of accountability and governance in the NHS has been a serious blow to our integrity and sense of fairness. I certainly feel guilty and marching is not only by way of an apology but also about trying to make things better for the future.

But then the question turns to but what could we have done, and was it really possible, given the widespread abuse of power- look at what happened with whistleblowers and no accountability for Mid-Staffs and other failures, and how did PFI ever get past the first base? Was it really possible for an individual to challenge and change things? And was not it ultimately down to values and how does one create and sustain good values, unless the system is organised to empower people and enable them to exercise them?

And we start going round in circles, but what everyone so far seems to agree on is the need to promote discussion and try for a cross party agreement on health services and find a way of holding the politicians accountable. But then what has been noticeable so far, mind you it is early days yet, has been the absence of politicians from the Coalition side to engage with the march. Plenty of Labour politicians including the Labour MEP, Jude Kartin-Darling and some reps from the Green Party but not Conservatives or Lib-Dems. I am told that invitations have been extended to all parties, and hope that as we progress down the route, we will see their participation. Otherwise, there is a danger of creating more polarisation, and I certainly do not want that.

What has been fascinating is the number of concerned people marching from not just the NHS, like Margaret, a retired consultant, but also teachers and my favourite today was the 77 years old painter and decorator who saw us marching and decided to join us, and indeed is going to bring his wife and the grandbairn for the next leg tomorrow.

Just to prove that I am the luckiest guy with so many caring friends, Mavis joined in again despite the dodgy ankle and Wendy arrived with a fantastic lunch – completely disrupting my diet plan! But very welcome and tasty- so thanks a lot. 2

And all the local mayors from surroundings areas turned up to receive us in Ferryhill, and there were stories of the original marchers who halted there in 1936, and indeed the local pub has a Jarrow beer called Red Ellen- named after Ellen Wilkinson, MP who was involved with the original march!



With Wendy and Mavis in Durham City



In the local pub, with the local vicar and the mayor

17 August 2014

Day 3: Ferryhill to Darlington

What a day! 930 pm and just finished the meeting at Darlington Town Hall which floored most of us – people across the ages recollecting their own and family experiences of the NHS. It all started with a 10 years old young boy, a cancer survivor, paying tribute to the great NHS for saving his life and left an 82 year old, literally choked, recalling his sibling who sadly passed away due to lack of affordable healthcare in the pre-NHS era. Story after story of the benefits of the NHS and scared of going back to the days when families were torn and people died because of not being able to access healthcare. If you ever wanted to understand the appeal of the NHS, then this was it- it has really touched lives. Emotionally charged meeting reinforcing the resolve to save the NHS, and even though I am physically shattered I am wide awake, and just proud to be a part of this march.

The day started in Ferryhill with a sumptuous breakfast (I should just give up on diet plan), with local people talking about the area and their health services. And these are deeply committed working class people and Brian Gibson, who challenged Tony Blair twice at the elections, was very upset with the betrayal by the previous Labour 'gang'. Alan Milburn, who made a lot of his very humble origins does no better and seemed to have forgotten his roots, according to this lot. Choice in health care is an illusion as they see it and they cannot understand why the brand new hospital in Bishop Auckland is mothballed. Lest one gets the impression that they were being too critical, they were very complementary of the local GP practice and appreciated the Sat/Sun opening of the surgery. So, these are people who can be objective and we would do well to listen to them.

The north-east commitment to the NHS continued to be evident throughout the day; the receptionist at the local hotel where our group of marchers stopped for a break not only offered the use of the facility, but also made a donation unsolicited.

It was great walking with Pat McCourt, County Councillor, in the morning – another deeply committed second generation Labour supporter and very interested in his area. The route passed through some of the most deprived areas, and not having been to these parts for over 20 years I was sad to hear about the racial tensions including the recent rise of the BNP in the area, which has been tackled to some extent now. Tony Blair's successor, Phil Wilson, is doing his best to create community cohesion.

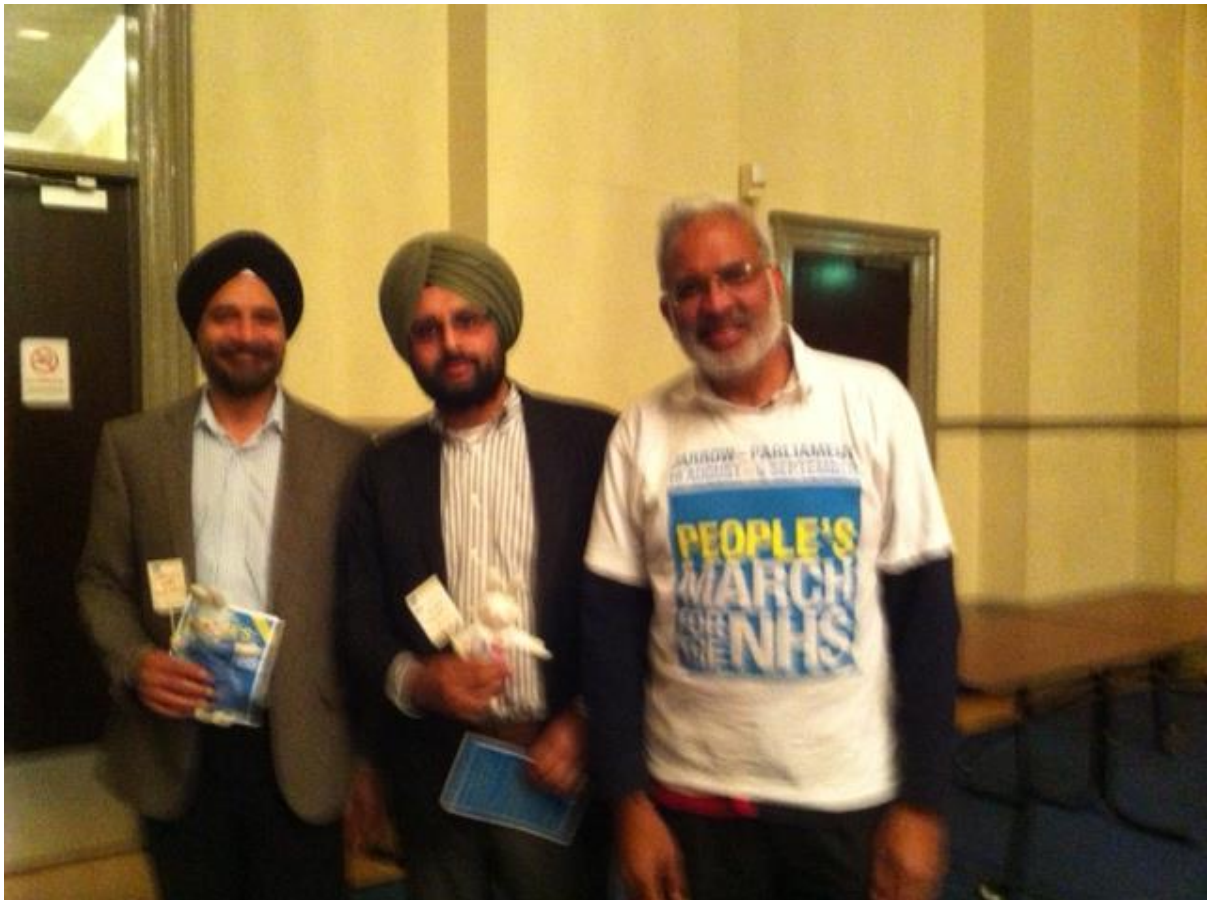
My new found friend, the Painter, from yesterday, Maurice Allen, did come back with his Grandson and wife and carried the banner throughout, and there were so many others who joined this leg of the march. The march is like a magnet drawing people from across the spectrum of society and not just health workers. We were all buoyed by the constant horn tooting lorries and cars – and what caught attention was that the fancy car drivers, the 4x4 ones (as my fellow walker described), were equally loud when passing by.

(Another) Bonus of the day was meeting Joe Treasure, an author, and perhaps he can give me some tips on writing, as I try and write my 'story' of the march.

Coming to Darlington was obviously very emotional for the organisers as this is where it all started, and there was a large crowd to welcome them.

All in all, the NHS is again going to be a big issue in the elections next year. And certainly these Darlomums are not going to drop this; they are well informed and are aware that there is a short window of opportunity with TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) with its irreversible privatisation being pushed through. They are watching the politicians and aim to serve notice to those who do not support the NHS. We may yet see some accountability coming back into the Government- that makes all this effort worthwhile!

18 August 2014



With Gill and Sidhu in Darlington Town Hall



With Brian Gibson



Maurice Allen with his grandbairn

Day 4: Darlington to Northallerton

Very different day I suppose is the only way to describe today's march. After setting out and having gone just a few miles, we realised that a lot of the route was not walkable as it was busy country roads, and we all know about health and safety ;-)
So, there was a lot of sitting around or being ferried in small groups in our battle bus (the van). Not a problem for those of us who are for the long march- and have all the time- but very disappointing for the day marchers, but eh that is life. The original Jarrow marchers did not have to worry about such things.

Had very interesting discussions about why people walk/march and do these things matter? Also how you walk- are you a 'talker' or 'thinker' on such walks in groups? One of my favourite poems is by Robert Browning Hamilton:

"I walked a mile with pleasure

She chatted all the way

But left me none the wiser

For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow

And never a word said she

But oh! The things I learnt from her

When sorrow walked with me."

I am personally a thinking walker and like to use the time to reflect and think things through. I was given this quote by Malcolm Philp recently: "All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking." - Friedrich Nietzsche. Not quite sure about having had any great thoughts but I do find the time very valuable. The one personal challenge is that my thinking is very inward focused, and so I miss out on appreciating the moment/surroundings! Something my wife and family know only too well – honest I do not do it intentionally!

Ofcourse, people march for different reasons. One of the books that I found fascinating recently was the "The unlikely pilgrimage of Harold Fry" by Rachel Joyce – which not only shows motivations but also the dynamics during such walks. Being together with 'strangers' for long periods – and try sleeping on floors in halls - is a very interesting experience and I thoroughly recommend it, it could even be made mandatory for bureaucrats and politicians!

Had some interesting discussions about whether such walks/marches make a difference, and again it depends on viewpoints. Having thought that the original Jarrow marchers were unsuccessful in getting their demands (requests) fulfilled, the march clearly influenced the electorate and led to the Labour Government and the start of the welfare state, according to Pat McCourt yesterday. And so, it may not

have the impact that was intended directly, but it can affect change indirectly – and so there has to be an element of doing such things altruistically. Another quote perhaps puts it better: “But the beauty is in the walking -- we are betrayed by destinations” - Gwyn Thomas. And in the spirit of the Hindu Holy book, The Gita, One must do what is right without expecting any rewards.

And so people march, and certainly there are many reasons to walk for the NHS. Jude Kortin-Darling, the north east Labour MEP, who has been with us for last 4 days (impressing) felt that activism/marches do matter and are taken seriously by the politicians, and quoted the 38 degrees and Countryside Alliance and pointed out that it was such efforts that stopped the sales of woodlands and Caroline Spelman, the then Environment Secretary ended up saying sorry. So, she thinks the Coalition should be afraid of the Darlomums, and take this march seriously; whether it is a real threat (I hope it is) or wishful thinking, time will tell! I do hope that some Coalition MPs will join us; I am not party political but I see/hear a lot from Labourites and would really like to get the other side also.

Talking of books, fellow walker, Trish Foley, mentioned “Harry’s last stand- How the World My Generation Built is Falling Down, and What We Can Do to Save it” by Harry Leslie Smith, as a must read.

We are being hosted by the Northallerton Forum tonight – who laid out a splendid tea (totally undeserved, as little walking but did not stop me- yummy cupcakes), and there is a showing of Michael More’s Sicko tonight. And I managed to get a shower-heaven.

So we keep talking and we keep walking, enjoying each other’s company, learning new things about life, self, and I am certainly the better for all this. So, thank you my fellow walkers, and all the supporters.



With Jude Kortin-Darling

19 August 2014

Day 6: Ripon to Harrogate

... and the North Yorkshire generosity continues, after a hearty, cooked, breakfast prepared by Elizabeth, Jenny, Ann, Heather and Kath we set off for Harrogate. The route took us through the country side, and going over the fields, carrying flags, made me feel like a real crusader – medieval scenes flashed through my mind, except that I was not on a white charger!, and cows were not very impressed either. And we arrived in Harrogate to another wonderful supper in the evening.

The journey today was a trip down the memory lane as met up with colleagues from my time, as a DPH and then Medical Director at the SHA, in Yorkshire and Humberside. We caught up on news of 'old colleagues and reminisced about those days; felt very pleased and proud that Hull York Medical School, which I was very actively involved in setting up has stood the test of time and continues to do well. The icing on the cake was when I discovered that Richard Turner, my former colleague from Hull was an invited speaker at the evening meeting!

It was good to round off the day with a meeting hearing about local issues and aspirations; we heard from various speakers and Alan Bennett had kindly sent in the following note, as he was not able to travel to address us:

“In pursuit of profits the Tories and their coalition partners want to roll back the state – and that includes the NHS, which is being stealthily sold from under us, who are its rightful owners.

Put the saving of the NHS at the heart of the next election, and they will be defeated.”

But the question then was who else is there, especially as Shan Oakes, the prospective Green Party candidate, pointed out all three parties love affair with the big business and how despite her party's recent successes they seemed to have been airbrushed out by the media.

Deep concerns expressed by speakers and audience alike about breaching the basic principle of “From each according to ability, and to each according to their need”, and the public really not waking up to what is going on – sleep walking into the nightmare of American health care scenario. Also how the profits are going out whilst the government, and the public, is responsible for the risks.

Most of all, a theme which is becoming recurrent, was about the failure of our democracy, and as Richard in his inimitable style suggested may be Guy Fawkes had the right idea! Certainly there is a mood to inject accountability into the political system, could the next election be an opportunity for the Green Party is a thought. I am going to read their health manifesto!

I continue to be amazed by the people's attachment and commitment to the NHS; Terry, from Tyneside, who has performed all sorts of jobs in his life including driving, handyman and is now a full time career for his wife, is doing the whole march with the support of his family who have chipped in to not only look after his wife but also financially.

Having missed the Tour de France in Yorkshire, I was impressed with the work that had gone into a successful event- parts of the route were festooned with yellow bicycles and bunting. Well done Yorkshire, proud of you.

To ensure that we do not become (more) bitter and twisted (*sic*) given the continuing concerns about the state of affairs, we decided to start thinking positively, and that brought out some real black humour, and there was sharing of some good jokes generally. My favourite in one liners was from Mike who heard it in Edinburgh : “I have got rid of my Hoover, all it was doing was gathering dust”! And the one I came across via twitter was from Yogi Berra : Nobody goes there anymore, it is too crowded”.



With Shan Oakes



Evening meeting in Harrogate



Hearty breakfast from a great team, Ripon



Wonderful Yorkshire



With Terry, proud to be marching with him

21 August 2014

Day 7: Harrogate to Leeds

What do a postman, lawyer, university professor, musician and a practice manager have in common? The answer: their commitment to and love of the NHS. The postman owes his life to the surgeons at LGI, for example, and the stories go on including how the loved one with the very unusual condition got referred all the way to the centre of excellence in London, without having to worry about whether they would get the right treatment or about who will pay. Everyday new people come and join our march – the young and the old alike, share their loved ones experiences, express their thanks to the NHS staff, vent their frustration (and indeed anger) at politicians and bureaucrats, and affirm their resolve to exercise their rights as citizens. Anyone who thinks this is going away could not be more wrong- people are going to hold politicians accountable and will fight to preserve the NHS- it seems to me that NHS is almost synonymous with being British; it defines us a humane society.

For the last week- it is exactly a week since I let home to go to Jarrow to start the march – I have been reflecting on the situation, and as I have done before I turned to one of my favourite books – Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance – for guidance and inspiration. It seemed to me that this quote pretty much sums things up:

“I think if we are going to reform the world, and make it a better place to live in, the way to do it is not with talk about relationships of a political nature, Programs of a political nature are important end products of social quality that can be effective only if the underlying structure of social values is right. The social values are right only if the individual values are right. The place to improve the world is first in one’s own heart and head and hands, and then work outward from there. Other people can talk about how to expand the destiny of mankind. I just want to talk about how to fix a motorcycle. I think that what I have to say has more lasting value. “

And I suspect this is what we are seeing now on the march, people come because they have the right values and they want to do their bit and this is what makes all this effort worthwhile.

The day started with a great breakfast with Janet and Ed (Red Ted!) Foster at their lovely home- they had put me up last night and I had a bed and a long soak in the tub! It was heaven.

The journey today again took in countryside, over the fields, and it was fascinating to talk to new people, only to discover some interesting connections. I was telling Jonathan Long from Leeds about my journey to the UK and how my first job was in the Shetlands Islands only to discover that he had just returned from a holiday there and in fact he was born in Kolkata, India! And all round you could hear animated conversations, common interest, and new friendships being formed. My young fellow marchers – Icarus and Vinny are teaching me the words to the famous Scottish song “Donald, where’s your troosers”!

The 'Sherpas' did very well again, rushing ahead and sorting things out before we arrived at our next stop, There was a great welcome committee at the outskirts of Leeds – well done Leeds- and we were addressed by Jacky Davis, co-author with Ray Tallis, of the book- NHS SOS: How the NHS Was Betrayed and How We Can Save It, at the center of Leeds at the conclusion of the march.

And it was not over yet, we got ferried to St George's Centre for a meal- and guess what, the local Gurudwara (The Sikh Temple) had prepared North Indian food (Bhature/Chole)- wonderful. And I have been whisked away by Bidy and Derek (Digger) to their lovely home, and are doing my washing.

With such generosity and commitment, there is hope for the future. I am going to sleep well tonight.



With Janet and Ed



.. the young



... and the older!



Rally in Leeds



Dinner – May I have some more



With Rehana Azam – Respect

22 August 2014

Day 8: Leeds to Wakefield

Yippee – I have broken my personal record and walked every day for a week, and it is a great feeling. I am on a roll now. Look out London I am coming. And it is not just me, there will be loads more, everyday there are more marchers- around 250-300 started from Leeds today. It was fascinating to look back on the long tail of marchers down the street, as we made our way to Wakefield, hooting and tooting and being serenaded by own band on this beautiful day; even the Gods are smiling on us. We were joined by ‘feeder’ marches, where people had marched from other places to join us on our route. If you have not already made the arrangements to join us in Trafalgar Square on 6 Sep, do so now; it will be the biggest event in recent years.

It is becoming repetitive, but I make no apology for sharing it, but they are coming simply because the NHS has touched their lives: I would not be here but for the NHS, it saved my life scenario is repeated time and again, and you realise that we tend to take things for granted and are in serious danger of doing the NHS down. I do not have to tell these marching folk anything because they are the converts but we do wonder why others are not equally concerned and indeed outraged and I feel like shouting: TAKE (SOME) PART IN THIS MARCH AS OTHERWISE THE NHS WON'T BE THERE.

We wonder about the complacency amongst our own colleagues, worry about the complicity of the establishment – why did the Colleges/BMA/Academy back down, and struggle to see how to create the medical leadership to stop this destruction given that the profession is now further divided. But then are uplifted when we see that we are not alone anymore, there is a groundswell of support from all sectors of the society, and it truly is a people's march.

And this last issue came out loud and clear at the rally in Wakefield when some speakers tried to make party political points- both, the Darlomums and the marchers soon put them right. Giving point scoring, opportunistic politicians the marching order, so to speak, and making it clear that it is the peoples march.

It is the ‘regular’ people of this country who are marching, like Dave, who know what life is like. Dave had a difficult upbringing, one of 8 children, who has ended up needing health services, and hates not being able to work. Despite all the challenges that his family faced, 7 out of 8 children work, pay taxes and contribute to the society. From taking – as they had to rely on the welfare state when young – to giving back, is a fantastic story and a powerful reason why we need to look after those less fortunate in our society; that way the circle of life continues.

As with previous days, meet new people and some colleagues from the past. I suspect many are surprised to see me amongst this ‘lot’ – after all I was the establishment, and they wonder what has happened to me. I am not sure whether I will be dining on the story of the Jarrow march for the rest of my life or be shunned! It was great to meet Jacky Davis today – who ‘leafletted’ all along the way and John Puntis from Leeds who has been the drummer, along with young trainee doctors,

Chiroprapist, GP and public health specialist, and people from many other walks of life.

And the generosity carries on; poor Bidy stayed up late last night to ensure that my washing was dry by the morning, lunch at Halfway House pub, tea at the Red Shed in Wakefield, and just when I thought I was going to be back in some hall for the night I was offered a bed at their home by Cath Emery and David Phillips. I am beginning to feel guilty (not really, but am very grateful).

I also had the best compliment today from Dave- Doc, for someone middleclass, you are OK! THANK YOU DAVE



Biddy and Digger - Respect



Dave – heart of gold



Jacky Davis – rally in Wakefield



Patients waving from the wards!

23 August 2014

Day 9: Wakefield to Barnsley

Oh dear – poor Geoff Dunbar, one of our main sherpas took ill last night and has ended up in hospital. Being Geoff, he did not want to disturb anyone during the night, and feeling ill, got into the van and drove himself to the hospital where he was admitted with an infection. We are all missing him; the latest news is that he will be discharged but has to go home and rest. Hope he recovers soon and can join us later; get well soon, Geoff.

The organising team coped very well with this situation and we were able to get on our way to Barnsley after a great send off at Wakefield Cathedral. Once again the march attracted people from other areas, bringing their own stories- Enid Smith's son shared the story of his mother's death at City Healthcare Partnership CIC which has left the family traumatised. More and more concerns about privatisation of the NHS- the plans to privatise wholesale cancer services and the current Care UK situation in Doncaster with workers already on long strike, for example – does not make sense to the people anymore. As Ray Tallies pointed out in his speech in Barnsley, there is no mention of these fiascos; instead there is a systematic programme to destabilise and sell off the NHS.

The 'No more reorganisation' promised by Cameron has ended up as the biggest disorganisation, and one which David Nicholson described as the change so big that it could be seen from the space. So far it has cost £3 billion – guess where it could have been better spent.

The NHS is constantly being portrayed as not being fit for purpose despite the Commonwealth report showing it to be the best health system in the developed world- something that the SoS should be proud of and shout from the roof tops about, but instead the NHS is being undermined.

And the claim that Health and Social Care Act was not about privatisation can no longer be defended given the scale of contracts already awarded or in the pipeline, and TTIP yet to come (unless we manage to defeat it). Ray Tallis' quote about "outsourcing cancer services to the private sector, who themselves are like cancer to the NHS" drew a huge applause (albeit expressed with grave frustration).

A range of speakers at our rally in Barnsley picked up on these themes and shared further observations; the Freedom Riders struggle to retain free travel for the elderly and the disabled in Barnsley, for example, shows such contempt for due processes and our society and values that it left us dumbstruck.

Nye Bevan's "In place of fear" aspirations which led to the establishment of the NHS has become "Fear in place" as people become more and more afraid of what will happen to them and their loved ones.

Great day out today, with excellent weather and crowds. Started very well with wonderful breakfast with Cath and Pete, with their home grown fruits, talking about growing vegetables and fruit, and coping with wildlife, travels etc - all the things that are important in life. To some extent such conversations provide respite from the

constant 'fight' on the road, and also the resolve because if we don't sort out the NHS and the democratic deficit we will lose everything that is worth living for.

We walk and we talk... and there are great stories. Like that of Geoff, a teacher from Huddersfield who is going to run 9 each of— 10k races, half marathons and full marathons- his version of 999 call for the NHS. So there are many ways to show support – get in touch via <http://999callforNHS.org.uk/>

And we find out sources which can help... see <http://nhap.org/> for more information, and facts which show how people are being misled.

And we find people who share concerns and are trying to do their bit- like the Darlimum and Ealing Councillor, Aysha Raza, and we talk about whistleblowers esp Sharmila's case in Ealing. Hope that Aysha will write to Sir Robert Francis and help us with improving staff safety.

After a great rally in Barnsley had a wonderful meal at the Hospital- eating in hospital restaurants brings back memories, and I can not help but indulge in the sponge and custard pudding (loved it, obviously not as good as my wife's). I do, however, wonder what is going on and how patients cope, and what a shame that we have commercialised everything, I really resented paying £1.99 for the smallest toothpaste tube. Sign of times...

Sleep well, my fellow travellers, and wellwishers. I will – unless Tone snores; we are sharing a room but hey it is better than floor in a hall!



Ray Tallis

Cath (next to me) and Pete

The Stockport marchers



Aysha Raza



Geoff's 999 initiative



£1.99 for this baby... lesson learnt

24 August 2014

Day 10: Barnsley to Sheffield

And finally it happened, I guess we were lucky to have avoided the rain so far, but today made up for it. Wet, wet, wet. Despite the weather, however, it turned out to be another great day.

Breakfast at Wortley Hall, thanks to GMB, was as one would expect from this great place which was full of people on breaks over the Bank holiday weekend. Not sure what they made of having to mix with us lot ;-) - actually the few I talked to were very supportive. Whilst appreciative of the hospitality, I was conscious that compared to the original Jarrow marchers, I was being spoilt. Those marchers used to send the food they received back home to their starving families – the wives and the bairns, who had not even seen some foodstuff like jam for some time. Shocking, until we realise that we may be going back to those days with more and more people relying on food banks.

Another great send off outside Barnsley Hospital with John Puntis, our drummer coming back for another march, and helping to keep the spirits up during the wet march. Achieved another first as we had our lunch standing under a bridge on A61 – fine dining indeed. Actually the lunch was quite good, especially as I stood next to Camilla who had brought some home grown vegetables- had some really crisp and sharp radishes and rocket, lovely.

Christine Hyde kept me company during the morning and her story was remarkable. Her mother was very distrustful of the policy to establish Foundation Trusts and cautioned Christine about the shape of things to come. Of course, Christine took no notice until 3 years ago when the current reorganisation started, and she did her own research and was shocked to read what was going. So she called a local community meeting to raise awareness and since then has been trying to inject some local accountability. With me being a poacher turned gamekeeper I can see why she was and is still getting the run around, but she is one determined women and continues to be a 'pain in the neck' for her local CCG.

A theme that has come up time and time again is to do with (lack of) medical leadership, and it seems ironic that now that the GPs themselves are being subjected to privatisation, they are beginning to realise that they have fallen into the trap. I hope that we will rise above the divisions in the profession and join with all other NHS workers and try and save the NHS; I personally believe that it is more about damage limitation given that a lot has already happened. For the last two days we have been hearing about the Doncaster Care UK workers, who have again gone on strike today, and the same fate awaits all in the NHS.

We need to remember Martin Niemoller's quote

"First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a communist;

Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a socialist;

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist;

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Jew;

Then they came for me— and there was no one left to speak out for me.”

The Silver City lived up to its reputation and we were greeted by a brass band on the outskirts and they marched us to the rallying point near the Sheffield Children's Hospital. I was interested to see that the crowd was not easily taken in by the Labour Party speaker's claims about being the defender of the NHS- David Blunkett, and other labour leaders, have not been seen by the locals! And why do they have to wait till the next election, there are ways to show that the Labour Party cares now was the Doncaster workers cry. To the frustration of some, myself included, it is not possible to have more debates at these rallies, and in any case I always thought that heckling was a legitimate and necessary activity!

Like all crises, this one has also brought out the best in people; I continue to be impressed with the satire and songs- the Socialist Choir and Body of Sound Choir together put on a great show with especially written songs. Did you know that there is a Campaign Choir Network- who sing especially in support of causes – see <http://campaignchoirs.org.uk/> - Fantastic.

Not only did the ladies sing for us, they laid out a most amazing spread, the table was buckling with food, and someone counted 10 different cakes alone for dessert! And then something that I have never seen before, they explained what was on offer in terms of accommodation – whether vegetarian or not, what sort of bedrooms, presence of pets and how we could get back to the starting point tomorrow! An auction in reverse, almost. Many of them went away disappointed as there were far more offers than marchers to take places up. I am being looked after tonight, along with Fiona and Joanne, by Leni who hails from New York and Jack, both former teachers in their lovely home.

If anybody had told us that we would be having such fun on the march, I do not think we would have believed it; but the great British spirit is alive and well. So, my advice to politicians would be “Be afraid, be very afraid” – the people are angry and they are getting organised, and the day of reckoning is coming.



John Puntis



Fine dining under A61 bridge



Christine Hyde- not to be trifled with



Reception by brass band

25 August 2014

Day 11: Sheffield to Chesterfield

And guess what? Sadly, Nick Clegg was not able to join us when we visited his constituency this morning in Sheffield, and there was no statement either. But the people of Sheffield turned out in force and brought their brass band to set us off on our next leg to Chesterfield. I got the feeling that Nick Clegg may have a serious challenge on his hands come May 2015.

The day started with some excellent speeches; Jillian Creasy, a GP, and Green Party Councillor reminded us of the famous Nye Bevan quote: "The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it", and how the fight for the NHS was essential to ensure not just health services but all public services, since health cuts were impacting on social services and which in turn were affecting education and environment etc and was creating a vicious downward spiral.

The theme recurred on the walk as I talked to others including Tony Plumridge, who should know about such things as he was a chief executive of Maldon local authority in Essex, and then chaired a PCT. We feel sad at how things have turned out, and fear for the next generation. We talk about community and social development and area based initiatives, and wonder why the system continues to do things to people rather than with people. The way the NHS has been gradually privatised is a classic change management case study of destabilising the status quo, creating confusion, bullying, and by managing the message and putting a spin on things. And this is repeated across all public services.

Tony also told me the story of his great, great aunt- Josephine Butler- who tackled prostitution and was one of the greatest social reformer of the 19th century, and I started feeling better about the march. There have always been and will always be good folk with the faith to fight for what is right. And suddenly the day seems to get better.

Although well-rested after a good night's sleep in very comfortable bed at Leni and Jack's place in Sheffield and a wonderful breakfast, the 11th day had caught up with me, and I was getting tired by the early afternoon, and the blisters on the feet were not helping. But then I got the second wind, the mood lifted and the sun also came out.

And we arrived in Dronfield on a site where the 1986 Jarrow marchers had stopped- there is very little known about this particular march and so it was good to meet Harry Barnes, the local MP until recently who had received them in 1986 and find out a bit more.

Talking to my fellow marchers I learn more about activism, compared to many of them I am a novice- Joanne Sanderson is the original Greenham Commons woman, for example, and they tell stories of previous protests, and how things do change, albeit not without struggle! It was fascinating to see that David Littlewood, who now lives in Algarve, had come specifically to march, as even though he has left UK, he felt it was his duty to come and march and support in any way that he can.

Harry also introduced me to the famous The Socialist ABC song by Alex Glasgow- and which he sang for us as we were entertained in the Chesterfield Market Stall after our reception in the market. The folk of Chesterfield had really turned out to welcome us, and not only did we have a good tea in the market stall, we were also given an Indian curry dinner at the Labour Party Club later on! It was great to visit the Club which was frequented by Tony Benn, who was the local MP from 1984-2001- they do not make them like Tony Benn anymore was a view expressed by many marchers. Where are the conviction politicians and how do we firm up the resolve of some of existing ones is the challenge facing us. We are supposed to go through Dennis Skinner's constituency also on our march – another political great.

This is turning out to be quite an educational and enjoyable march. I was advised to refrain from describing this as a great free holiday, as I have spent hardly any money thanks to the generosity of the people on the way, but although it has been hard in parts I cannot help but feel happy about supporting the Peoples' march. It is not too late to come and join us – do good and have fun, what more could one ask for! Hope to see you soon.



Dr Jillian Creasy addressing us



Harry Barnes



In Sheffield
26 August 2014



In Tony Benn's club- Chesterfield

Day 12: Chesterfield to Mansfield

The day starts outside Chesterfield Hospital, which is on Red Alert for admissions, in August, and the impression I got was that this was not unusual. The days of lighter workload and respite from the relentless pressure on beds in summer have long gone and it is a year round crisis in the NHS. And yet, bed numbers are being cut – the mind boggles esp as there is hardly any investment in creating the necessary community services to support these cuts, and keep patients safe. So, the struggle goes, and we keep marching.

Was prepared well for today's march by Angus and Pat at their lovely home, who provided the bed and breakfast- yummy porridge with home made thick cut marmalade on toast, my favourite. And this was supplemented enroute by plentiful lunch in Bolsover.

The 'Beast of Bolsover' was not there but sent a message of solidarity with the marchers and promised to be there in London to meet us. He does not mince his words "This government have been in power for four years. They could have chosen to remedy some of the continuing problems in the health service, but what did they do? They decided to reorganise it from top to bottom. Is there any wonder there is a developing crisis. Instead of closing A&Es and walk-in-centres, why does not the Secretary of State walk away? It would give him more time to count his money". The regard for Dennis Skinner was evident, and he will be putting his weight behind the Labour's plans for repealing the Health and Social Care Act and promoting integration.

Marching to Bolsover meant going past all those closed pits- locals pointed out pit after pit, and the magnificent Bolsover Castle which was built with the labour and profit from the pits. What is left now is unemployment on a 'mass' scale and demoralised communities, with shops closed and pawn shops and loan shops coming up. Harry L Smith's book is becoming very popular, and his fan club is growing day by day.

Although a health march, the same situation is replicated across all public services and we are joined by teachers NUT and other unions. We reflect on the situation whereby it is harder to get people to join unions, and who in turn are not able to exercise the strength they once enjoyed. It has become a self fulfilling prophecy – not enough members leading to weaker unions, and driving members away. Increasingly different sectors are coming together to fight the privatisation of public services.

Getting into Mansfield we were greeted by NUM with their colorful banners and there was a huge crowd, and it seems strange to be pointed out as the 300 milers and some people want to shake your hands. It is not celebrity but more fellowship, and Infact I feel humbled. There were more speeches, and also a play specially written for the occasion.

The weather was great, sunny and dry, but I missed our band/drummer. It was great to see the little children coming out to wave to us, on the way, alongside the usual

hooting cars and lorries. Brian, a fellow marcher, has acquired an unusual celebrity status as the TV crew was keen to video his feet! But guess feet are important for the march and the folk at the Hillocks Primary School where we are staying tonight were considerate enough to provide some radox and tubs to soothe our feet.

A great start and a great end to the 12th day- over the half way mark! As the saying goes: If a man can get up in the morning and go to bed at night and do what he likes in between then he is lucky, and in that sense I guess I am very lucky.



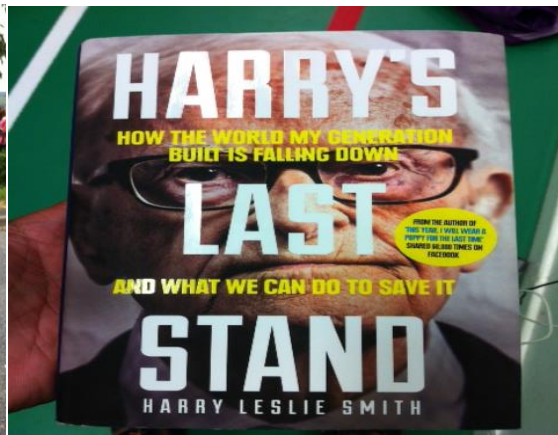
Angus and Pat's home



RIP Glapwell colliery



Why we need to save the NHS



The hero



And the pampered!

27 August 2014

Day 13: Mansfield to Nottingham

I have finally arrived – receiving the Badge from the Notts Ex and Retired Members association today was a real highlight. I believe that they do not give these badges easily and so feel very privileged that they decided to give badges to all 300 milers. I was actually working in Ireland during the miners strike so have no direct experience of those times, but having lived in the northeast and now having marched through Yorkshire and Derbyshire I can see the impact of pit closures. I have always had a lot of respect for the miners and their families who have suffered a lot in the last few decades. The fear of losing the NHS now is galvanising these communities, and they are coming out in larger numbers.

We set off from Mansfield where we had stayed in a primary school, and after great 'craic' the evening before; there was song and poetry and good fun was had by all. Sleeping communally can be challenging but we did manage, and the school had done well to get some decent mattresses.

We assembled at Kings Mill Hospital to start off and in addition to the usual addresses, we had Dr John Dale, Consultant Occupational Health Physician join us. Suffice to say that he spoke from the heart and pointed out the challenges facing the health service, and his message struck home with the marchers. As an occupational health physician he obviously sees the effect the NHS changes are having on the staff and he is also very aware that these services are now largely in private hands. Given my interest in worker safety I share his concerns, especially the limited availability of 'Occy Health'.

As in the days before meet new friends and share stories/experiences. Whilst the public is rightly concerned about clinical services, they do not always appreciate that a lot of other NHS activities are also being prepared for 'sale'. We talk about R & D work going to tender, and the growing influence of the 'Big 5' management consultancies in policy making.

I also met with Janina Kehr, an anthropologist, from France, who came to observe the march for two days. She is undertaking a comparative study of the Spanish health system and the NHS, both of which share similarities in terms of increasing privatisation, and she is studying the role of public opinion and activism in stopping such reforms. So, we are not alone in our struggle. Clearly the ideology of market introductions is widespread and we bemoan the fact that there seems to be blind acceptance of the superiority of the private sector; many of us who have direct experience of working in both, public and private sectors, however a contrary view about their efficiency not to mention their values.

The media has started taking increasing interest in our march; and so we are regularly being interviewed, and every now and then I have also to play my part. I have always struggled with the sound bite way of engaging with TV, and been struggling to explain briefly why I am marching. I think I finally got it when I said to Notts TV that I was marching to stop the destruction of the world's best health care system.

What happens next when we arrive in London and beyond is anybody's guess, but judging by the last few days it seems to me the march is gathering momentum and we have been told that the final rally will be in Trafalgar Square on 6 Sep. Going by the famous quote by Gandhi "First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win", it looks like that we are onto something since the establishment is no longer able to ignore or ridicule the Darlomums and hopefully we will win the fight to save the NHS.

Just to confirm that we are onto something here Nottingham turned out in large numbers for the final rally and we were again spoilt for choice as there were lots of people who wanted to take us home to give us dinner and beds! I was chosen by Shelley and Ben, who have taken me to their beautiful home where I have just spent a wonderful evening with their two young sons, Alfie and Sol, and the baby girl Martha- families is what life is about. What a great way to finish another day's march.



Getting my Badge- an honour



Dr John Dale



Breakfast in Mansfield



Arriving in Nottingham

28 August 2014

Day 14: Nottingham to Loughborough

Another great day. Bobbi Wallace, a colleague from my South Tyneside days, who has just retired from Chapel Hill, North Carolina and was over in the UK to see her daughter joined us. Bobbi walked some of the way and we caught up on old days and she also updated me on the healthcare developments in USA. Between Medicare part A, part B, Medi-Plus and Drugs cover I almost lost the plot – suffice to say that a) Bobbi is well educated and knows her way around the system and even then she had to seek (and pay for) professional help to decide which policies to buy and b) it is going to cost her \$300 per month, and this is when she is in good health (and long may it continue). The American nightmare may become a reality here if we are not careful.

I have made my escape plan with Bobbi's help –she has a house in Costa Rica and has invited me, and given what they have managed to achieve there in human and social development Costa Rica sounds nice. I hope it does not come to that though and that our march will help stop this nightmare scenario happening in the NHS. And I am doing my bit, I am on TV – supposedly 10 seconds of my interview made it on the news last night, and a few strangers even came up to me on the march today to say hello having seen me on TV. Not quite the 15 minutes that Andy Warhol talked about, but I guess in the age of twitter, 10 seconds is good enough!

And it is not just me, there are increasing numbers of people who are doing their bit and joining us, and so we had another great send off from Nottingham. But guess what, Ken Clarke was not able to join us, sadly, even though we called in on his office on the way. I still remember the 'Working for Patients' policy which introduced the internal markets and set the scene for what we have today, and which was overseen by Ken Clarke in the late 1980s. And of course, doctors do remember him for his saying about "Doctors reaching for their wallets". He is certainly not short of a quid or two- having made a killing (*sic*) from tobacco industry. Most of us struggle with the ethics of being a health minister and then working with tobacco industry, and of course he was not alone as Margaret Thatcher also promoted them.

We walk and talk about the state of the world, the morals of politicians and the growing influence of the oligarchs. We wonder why we cannot learn from Cuba and Costa Rica, and we talk about Harry Smith : "So, it has always been difficult for me to listen to politicians, proud possessors of health insurance and shares in private health care companies, when they talk about how the health services that we fought so hard to build must change".

We end up discussing whether the NHS is now institutionally corrupt – and that it was not possible for people working in the system to stop the gradual slide, even if they wanted to. We hear stories of how good people have been leant on, or ended by being made redundant. Not everyone has the energy to become a whistle blower.

The day started with the baby, and young Sol full of energy and looking forward to another exciting day- just as it should be for children; they came to drop me at the Nottingham County Council offices. The march today was well paced, but mostly on

the busy Loughborough road, often in single file, making conversations harder. And being the 14th day, it was also harder on my feet especially the left one which has been pretty sore for 2 days now. Thankfully my old medical school friend, Umesh Roy, a GP in Leicester, has picked me up and taken me home and with his wife Dulcie is looking after me. I am in good hands and hope to be ready in the morning for the next stage.



Whose NHS, our NHS



Sadly Ken Clarke was not available



Setting off to drop me

29 August 2014

Day 15: Loughborough to Leicester

The day started with a chat with my mum in Mumbai, as it is her birthday. She has been following my progress and is cheering me on this march—she gets what the Darlomums are doing. My mum (and dad) was a refugee, got married at 17, and had four children and devoted herself to them; even now she spoils me! I will have the cake with her when I see her in early October.

My feet well rested and buoyed by the chat with my mother I am ready for our march from Loughborough. As it happens it was also the local market day and so there was a huge crowd to see us off and many of them joined in.

I was pleased to meet colleagues from the Indian Workers Association who told me about their experiences, one of them had come to the UK in 1954 and obviously has seen a lot of change. We talk about race discrimination, which sadly persists- they remember struggling to get jobs, and about finding accommodation as the Irish and Indians were not welcome in many places. We feel sad that many people in the UK do not understand that we came here because of the British values of fairness, equality, the welfare state and the NHS. Having seen what is happening in India with healthcare, with millions of people becoming bankrupt after hospitalisation every year, we are thankful for and remain deeply committed to the NHS.

The Indian Workers Association is affiliated with the Communist Party in India, and I find it interesting (and pleased) that they were able to march with us today; anyone associated with the Communist Party was not allowed to march in the original Jarrow march in 1936!

But whether the NHS will be there for us and the future generations worries us and although we take solace from various efforts we wonder whether the rot can be stopped. Louise Irvine, who led the Lewisham Hospital campaign joins us and shares her experience, and how they have had a reprieve. I also meet Mark Cockerton who is an expert in out of hours GP services and committed to stopping privatisation – he shares his efforts in Hackney and many other places and how by creating ‘emotional ownership’ by local GPs, he has been able to create much more effective, safer and economic services. But we are aware that things are getting difficult with relentless pressure to bring in private sector, and increasing hurdles in bidding and winning contracts and which means that only the biggest will survive. And in any case the whole exercise of procurement is costly, the last contract Mark managed to secure cost the commissioners £250k in administration alone – money that could have been better spent elsewhere.

Unless the march succeeds and the current plans to privatise stop, the above are only temporary victories anyway, and there won't be an NHS as we have known it. And I begin to feel like Harry Smith in his book : “Sometimes I try and think how I might explain (to Marion) how we built these beautiful structure in our society- which protected the poor, which kept them safe at work, healthy in their lives, supported them when they were down on their luck- only to watch them be destroyed within a few short generations. But I cannot find words. “

And I start to feel guilty, guilty about being complicit. Remember I was there for the last two decades, as a senior medical manager, during which we gradually but surely introduced private providers and markets. I remember trying to create the 'market' and bringing in new providers; defending the untested providers by saying that they were untested because the NHS has no tradition of alternative providers and of course we had to start somewhere and unless we introduced them there would be no competition and choice, and arguing that we should not be precious about the NHS providers and should be agnostic about who provides, and that we as commissioners would ensure that quality and safety of services was assured regardless of who provides.

To some extent this march is my penance. I am determined to do whatever I can to make amends and to ensure that the NHS survives.

I am looking forward to meeting more people on the rest of the march, and beyond. Together we can.

The day turns out nice- dry and sunny most of the way, our route takes us through Mount Sorrell and the green where the original Jarrow marchers stopped for a rest and were looked after by the local people. There is a huge crowd in Leicester to receive us this evening, and my friend Umesh, who is active in NHS management locally having been a PEC Chair and now on the CCG Board, comes to join the rally and take me to his home for more pampering.



Setting off from Loughborough



Indian Workers Association colleagues



Lunch time



Dr Louise Irvine



Umesh Roy- who is always there for me

30 August 2014

Day 16: Leicester to Market Harborough

Beautiful morning at Leicester Cathedral with bells ringing and people going for the Sunday service, and others coming from all over to join us for the day. Leicester city centre is undergoing redevelopment and so some of the streets are blocked off creating logistic problems. I use the time to see around the Cathedral, with the statue of Richard III whose remains were found in the Council car park and will be reinterred in March 2015. It is going to be a big event and has been described as having the "character of a state funeral without being one"; so look out for it.

Rehana is feeling a bit low as her son is going to start new school on Wednesday, and she won't be taking him there. Having met the young fella I am sure he will understand and be proud of his mum, in time.

Good to see Martin Rathfelder, who travelled down from Manchester to march today and I catch up on the news. Martin as usual is involved in various things on both sides, provider and commissioning. The big hospital reconfiguration review consultation finishes soon and it will be interesting to see what the final decision will be. Martin remembers the closure of Withington and move to Wythenshawe, an exercise which took 20 years!

We need the NHS to become more agile, but that will require lot more work and proper community engagement. Having been involved in various reconfigurations and closures during my career, there is no doubt that the NHS has a problem – and which is the general feeling that things are being done to people and not with them. The Eastbourne, Save the DGH, group has come again and shares their story of how their DGH is being systematically downgraded, with services going to Hastings, and this situation is being repeated in many other places.

It was great to walk and talk with David Nicholl from Birmingham, who brought his daughter along, and clearly David is a tweeter as he spent a lot of time on the road on his smart phone! We talk about the H&SC Bill and the medical establishment's response in 2012 – David had organised a survey of the RCP members to ascertain their views about the Bill which was still under discussion then, and only 6% of the respondents had supported it, with 69% recommending outright rejection, and the remainder suggesting other options including continuing dialogue. We wonder about the disconnect between grassroots and the leaders of the medical establishments, not just at RCP but generally, and how come the views of the vast majority get ignored; there are theories about why that happens though!

Other marchers share their observations and how between 1980s when there was one nurse for every three patients on the ward to last year when there was only one nurse for the whole ward at night, was the experience of one marcher who had been hospitalised on these occasions. They talk about their own and loved ones experiences of falling between the cracks due to increasing fragmentation of services, and especially for people with mental health and learning difficulties and of students at universities. What happened to the seamless care?

The march today was along the busy road, with much tooting from passing cars, and given safety concerns with lack of pavement on a stretch of the road we had to be bussed across. Terry and I feel upset about doing this and so walk as far as we can before getting on the van – rebels, and creating some confusion, sorry Jo Adams!

Market Harborough town centre looks pretty and we have a good reception on arrival. It is always good to meet people who come up to you to say hello and some of them have even read my blogs! I always wonder who reads them and what do they make of them, now I know – Emma assured me that she had read the last one and will read the others – thanks.

We are being put up in the Methodist Church in Market Harborough and they went out of their way to make us comfortable. We have to find ways of amusing ourselves and the imagination runs riot, making songs and telling stories, and Trish falls about laughing seeing the horn coming out of my head!



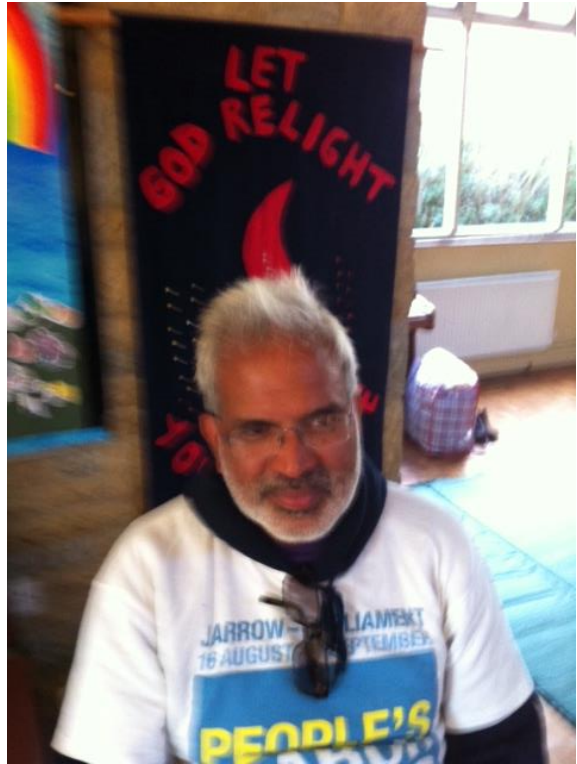
Leicester Cathedral



Martin Rathfelder



With Emma and her son



Whatever makes you happy, Trish

31 August 2014

Day 17: Market Harborough to Northampton

Bill Cotton came to see us off this morning from Market Harborough to Northampton, having been there when the original Jarrow marchers came through in 1936 – he remembers the day well (he called it the Hunger march though) and how everyone, poor as they were, pitched in to bring food for the marchers. Bill is very upset with what is happening and holds politicians responsible for breaking up the welfare state, and feels that Guy Fawkes should have finished the job. Many others also joined in sending us off on day 17, and it turned out to be another interesting day.

Nigel, who works as a healthcare assistant, wanted to walk even though he was going to work on the afternoon shift. He feels the pressure at work, with having to do more with less, when absences are not covered and gradual reduction in staff numbers. Having worked in newspaper business before he knows how the general public is being manipulated by the media. He feels for the staff who feel disempowered and not able to speak up.

The latter theme gets picked up by Simon, who is a care worker on zero hour contract. The agency he works for has recruited a lot of workers and hence there is competition for hours, however limited – beggars cannot be choosers situation, and no one complains as they then lose whatever little they can get. Simon moved from London and in addition to poor income he is spending more on transport and fuels during winter.

Really sad as the general rhetoric is about looking after staff – Len Holden, a former academic in Human Resources, or rather human remorse as he calls it, has studied the subject extensively, including internationally, and feels that one of the biggest myths is about ‘staff being our greatest asset’. He feels that profits triumphs staff welfare everytime in the private sector (almost).

We walk along the old Market Harborough to Northampton railway line – and almost 14 miles of the day’s march were on a trail. It reminded me of the Trans Pennine Trail with miles of (now long gone railways) track with banks on either side, especially on the western side of the TPT. The hard ground and the monotony today was broken by the two tunnels – Oxenden and Kelmars, both over 400 meters long and pitch dark! Thankfully there were some torches and we somehow found our way through the tunnels. It appears that Churchill’s train had stopped overnight on these tracks.

We were joined by a father and son team who came dressed in the 1930s style, and managed to walk all the way! They shared the story of the Pathology department workers lock out at Northampton Hospital – the management had to finally give in. But for how long is anybody’s guess.

The cynical view is that Simon Stevens has been brought in to finish off the job he started under the Labour government, when he was Tony Blair’s advisor, and the NHS will be privatised in the next 2-3 years and Simon Stevens will be back in the private sector to benefit from the privatisation of the NHS. If that happens he won’t

be the first one, as many other senior NHS figures have already moved into private sector.

And I start to feel depressed again, and especially as the feet are hurting now. But the rally in Northampton revives me. We hear from various speakers and especially from Tony Clarke who was a Labour MP from 1997-2005 and is now with the Green Party. Seemingly he had argued against the Foundation Trust Policy and feels very strongly that Labour's achievements and the extra investment in the NHS is in real danger of being wasted. He is keen to promote a cross party agreement on the NHS.

So, all to play for still – the march is growing, and it looks like there is going to be a great rally in London. Come and join us – only 5 more days left, apart from a worthy cause it is good to meet some great folk, see who we found on the march today – Mary and Kate are both actors (actresses).



With Bill Cotton



The Jarrow marchers



In the tunnel



Tony Clarke



With Kate and Mary

1 September 2014

Day 18: Northampton to Bedford

Disaster- the tomatoes are dying! We (or rather my wife, Lisa) had finally started a vegetable garden and planted lots of tomatoes also. We are not sure why, but many of the tomatoes are rotting, and instead of a bumper harvest we will be lucky to have a handful. Disappointed, but press on with saving the NHS, leaving Lisa to look after the home affairs, as usual. Missing home though.

The Asian Women's Centre in Northampton had put us up for the night and fed us well the night before – good Indian curry – and gave us a good breakfast also, and we were well prepared for the march. The weather also helped and it was sunny throughout.

Mary, a local person, was a bit disappointed with the turnout, she thought that given the concerns about not just Northampton, but also neighboring hospitals, that there would be a lot more of them. None the less, there is growing support for the march, and attracting people from all over. Mary's friend, Sue had come because of her daughter, who is an audiologist in Sunderland and who had marched with us from Jarrow. David and Nicky, a retired couple had travelled from Suffolk to march, and were disappointed that other commitments precluded them from doing more days. David used to work for British Rail and compared to railways he thought that the NHS privatisation was not a sell-off but more of a giving away.

Ian, a biomedical scientist and union rep, recounts his experiences of being at the sharp end of privatisation; Pathology services were opened up to the private sector many years ago- 'Carterisation' as he called it. And we remember the Decontamination strategy and outsourcing of CSSD services, and how such privatisations were destabilising hospitals.

Great excitement on the way, as the route takes us through Lavendon, the village which featured heavily in the Jarrow march, mainly because some of the iconic pictures of the original march were taken there. So, of course we had to recreate the scene – with big fanfare and press; a new plaque is to be added to mark our passing through. I will be part of history now! The excitement meant that we ran late (quite late) and coupled with no place to walk on the busy road, we ended up being 'bussed' for some of the march, drat!

Andy Burnham, the Shadow Health Secretary, joined us in Biddenham village, just outside Bedford and walked the last mile with us. A huge crowd awaits us in Harpur Centre, and by now the familiar story is recounted as people share their concerns about running down of local hospital services. It is interesting to note that so far hardly anyone has criticised their local services despite the MidStaffs and Keogh Trusts failures, and regular media stories of failures. Most people are very grateful for the care, and also prepared to accept some lapses – access, and local access, is the main concern. It may be that the marchers and supporters are more informed and understand how the NHS is being run down by politicians to pursue the market ideology and to cut down the welfare state, and for the benefit of the already very rich. Someone recalls Noam Chomsky's quote "That's the standard technique of

privatisation: defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital."

Nearby in Cambridge there is a 'battle' going on about tendering of elderly care services, with a contract value of £800 million over five years – the process has cost about £1m already, again money which could have been spent elsewhere. Major concerns expressed about how services were being tendered generally and the open conflicts of interests. Andy Burnham promises to repeal the H & SC Act and fight the TTIP- and the crowd cheers, but there are private murmurings about whether he can deliver the whole package needed.

Coming into Bedford was important for another reason, as the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, which I chair, is based here and it was good to see some of my colleagues joining us for the rally. No way was I going to be allowed to pass through without the Indian hospitality, and so have ended up at the home of Ramesh Mehta, the President of BAPIO. He and his wife Ritu were at the Cricket ODI in Birmingham earlier and with India's win today the spirits were high; the dinner made by Ritu was excellent. And all is well in my world for tonight- I hope I do not have nightmares about tomatoes!



Our poor tomatoes



Bianca, Anjana and Nicola- fellow marcher



Part of history in Lavendon village



Listening to Andy Burnham

2 September 2014

Day 19: Bedford to Luton

Alyson Pollock's Reinstatement paper is now out and argues for abolishing competition and the purchaser: provider split, reestablishing public bodies and public accountability, and restricting the role of commercial companies. It draws on some of the best examples of NHS administration over its history, and suddenly I am transported to pre-Thatcher reforms NHS. I joined public health training in 1988, just before 'Working for Patients' and the introduction of internal markets, and this was the time of the district health authorities and FPCs and the whole system overseen by regional health authorities, and between the CHCs and boards consisting of local people (and mostly unpaid) there was community ownership. Of course there was rivalry and inequalities and I remember Newcastle getting the bigger slice of 'cake' compared to Teesside (where I was training), for example, but on the whole that system was a lot better than what we have ended up with. Indeed, I have often wondered if we had stuck to those principles and just kept those structures overall we would have been much better off, financially and in human costs terms. I am intuitively drawn to Alyson's model – so Back to the Future then.

But this will require a major restructuring of the NHS – having lived through far too many reorganisations I can understand the reluctance to embark on another one but equally I cannot see how one can be avoided. The current organisation – a change so big that it could be seen from the space – is not fit for (any, except causing chaos) purpose. But who will put the Humpty-Dumpty together again? I have not heard much commitment to the structural changes from the Labour party people so far, although there is talk of integration and repealing of the H & SC Act.

Anyway, Alyson has set the ball rolling and there will be more analyses and proposals in the next few months- 246 days to the NHS referendum as the next election were described by a speaker on our march today. Another great day today, with many interesting conversations.

It was good to meet and talk to Dr Nick Johnson, a paediatrician from Hinchbrook Hospital and a prospective Labour Party candidate. I find out more about the pediatric services in the region and according to Nick it will be interesting to see how Bedford will cope this winter. Working under a private sector management (Circle) obviously is not for everyone and I understood that some people (clinicians) did leave, and although there have been demonstrable aesthetic improvements and Circle is good at reputation management, the Hospital has had to rely on government subsidy. Not sure if the model can be replicated across the NHS without massive costs.

It was also good to meet Natalie Bennett, the leader of Green Party, and talk about political reforms. Proportional representation offers a way but there does not seem to be much support for it and we are stuck with our current first past the post system, which means that it may be a while before we see the necessary disruptive change in our political system. I am very disheartened with the failure of our democracy with very little accountability and hope that a) more people will vote and b) hold their local elected representatives accountable – at least it will be a start.

The day started well with a great send off outside Bedford Hospital, with a packed lunch provided, and some friends came to see me off. I used the visit to Bedford to catch up with my BAPIO colleagues, and also with Vijay Gautam who has relocated to India from the NHS and was in the UK for a visit, and is keen to develop Indo;UK collaborations on health. The march went well, much of the time in contemplation and listening to Brian's harmonica – I like it and harmonica reminds me of western films with cowboys and deserts and moons!

We arrived to a great rally in Luton, and speaker after speaker tore into the Coalition Government, with phrases like noses in the trough (given the numbers of MPs and Peers with health care companies business connections) and the crowds cheer to the calls of keep your filthy hands off the NHS. I can see that the NHS is going to be a major issue for the 2015 elections. Be interesting to see how many NHS staff stand for elections – and from which platforms/parties.

The large numbers of BME people in Luton as we walked through the streets was notable; and it was sad to hear comments about keeping immigrants out from some people who came to heckle us, including a very irate motorist who made some rude gestures too – the influence of EDL is still there obviously.

We are staying the night at Bury Park Community Centre and am back on the floor after the luxury last night- but it should be OK. I am getting used to my fellow marchers ;-). Only 3 more nights, I think I will miss them when the march ends. There is already talk of what next – to be continued.....



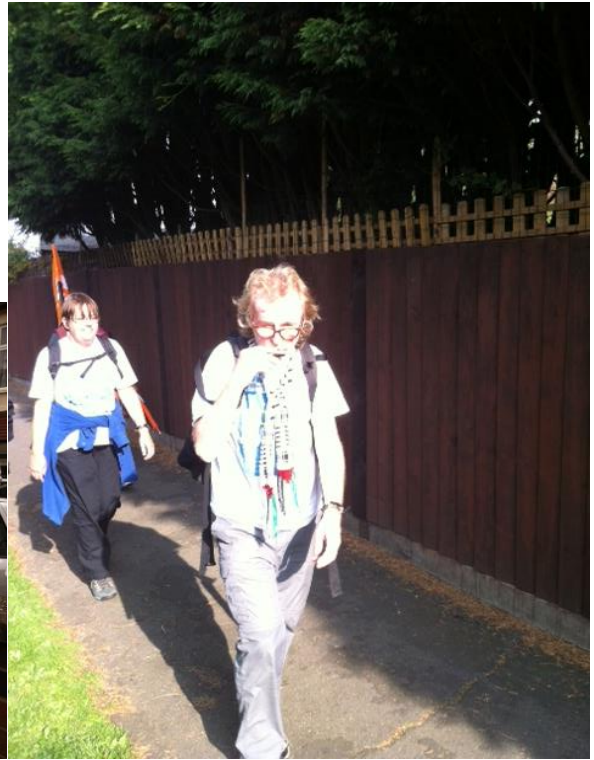
Vijay Gautam



Nick Johnson



Natalie Bennett



Brian with harmonica

3 September 2014

Day 20: Luton to St Albans

Eat your heart out – see what you missed by not joining the march. I have now a signed CD of The Spirit of 45 from Ken Loach himself. More importantly, finally we also have a clear roadmap for what next for the NHS. Ken Loach spoke at our rally in St Albans and as one would expect he is not happy with the way things are in the NHS – public good turned into private greed, with help from our main political parties. He does not buy Andy Burnham's idea of repealing the H & SC Act, and would like to hear this promise from Ed Balls and Ed Miliband directly. After all it was the Labour Party who took Thatcher's reforms further and provided the platform for what we have now with massive and wholesale privatisations. His advice was clear:

- Stronger unions – but doing the bidding of the members, and especially the progressive ones, and not cater to the lowest common denominator
- Stronger professional leadership – from clinicians
- And then the Political leadership – where he sees a new model emerging.

His aspiration is for a coalition of the minority parties: the Greens and Left Unity, and who can put pressure on the Labour to get back to its core values. In any case he urged the gathering to make sure that their votes count. Stirring stuff.

The day started with a breakfast provided by the Luton Council in a café opposite the Town Hall, Dave Taylor, the local councillor, told me about the burning down of the Town Hall in 1919. Seemingly, the great and the good gathered to celebrate the winning of the War, but not a single veteran was invited – in protest the veterans burnt the hall down. Looks like some things never change, the poor remain cannon fodder and for providing rich pickings to the well off. The march took us via the disused rail track and now cycle track to Harpenden on way to St Albans – very scenic, and well maintained with a tribute to Eric Morecambe in the countryside. Harpenden Green provided the setting for the lunch stop, and Terry paid twice what we would pay for his lunch bait (as he calls it)! He won't be moving down south in a hurry.

Discussions about local democracy and why the local authorities are not challenging the Government about austerity cuts, but then how does one do that with Eric Pickles! We talked about the conundrum between access, quality and finance- and am surprised to see that some of my fellow marchers have a very limited understanding of patient safety issues in the NHS. Good to see young folk joining us- Jack Murphy a student in Nottingham came because of his concerns for not just the NHS but generally. He talked about their stance on privatisation of student loan and how that plan was defeated; so some hope, but only if we can put a permanent stop to the privatisation policy overall.

Much time now being spent on contemplation about where next after the march – Christine and Trish have a plan and are exploring calling a meeting of various foras : KONP, Peoples Assembly, 38 Degrees etc and discussing how to join forces to influence both, national and local policy. The aim has to be to stop worsening of the

situation. I am caught between my desire to remain non-aligned and to join something as solo working is hard.

It seems to me that Allyson Pollock's NHS reinstatement paper with Ken Loach's advice provides a great roadmap for the future- a publicly owned, run and accountable NHS.

I have never been to St Albans, but looks like it is worth a trip to see the Roman ruins, and the oldest pub – is it Fighting Cocks? – Neil had a drink there but can't remember the name now- "If you can remember then you were not there"!

After the rally, we were entertained by an Irish Band, and there was much singing and dancing. I had to refrain from the latter as had to get my feet seen to- managed to find a chiropodist who saw me at 2030 – great to have some extended hours services, but of course I had to pay for it. We are staying at the Methodist Church tonight, and the place is pretty good- so should get some good sleep. Only 2 days to London- amazing.



Ken Loach



Getting Eric Morecambe's blessings



Great craic

4 September 2014

Day 21: St Albans to Edmonton, and then to London

This is the final daily blog as tomorrow we march to London, and I will be ready for some rest and recreation! We did the St Albans to Edmonton leg today, and everyone is in great spirits and looking forward to the big rally in London tomorrow.

I am still surprised at myself for having made it, and also having stuck to the discipline of writing a daily blog – so there is hope for me yet!

I spent the march today taking stock, and thinking about where next for me.

It has been a fantastic experience- seeing the country, meeting people on the way, and spending time with the fellow marchers. They came from all walks of life and from all parts of the country, and indeed overseas. They were united by their love for the NHS, their commitment to looking after the vulnerable in society, and most importantly their determination not to be the ones who squandered their inheritance – they told stories of their parents and grandparents who had fought to create the welfare state- and wanted to pass this onto the future generations. Although already appreciative of the architects of the welfare state and of Nye Bevan for creating the NHS I admire them even more- it could not have been easy. That sort of political leadership is not much evident in the UK now.

This has been a people's march and as Rehana Azam said at each stage – this march is about serving notice to all politicians that they need to listen to the people, and not take them for granted. The people of the country want to be their brother's and sister's keepers, have a collective responsibility, create a civic society and they are prepared to fight for it.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to participate in this phenomenal march and so my thanks to the Darlomums, my fellow marchers, and all who joined us physically and in spirit.

What next is what has taxed me all along the way. Too many causes and too little time generally anyway? The focus of the march has been on privatisation and austerity but there are many things wrong with the system now – there has been little mention of quality/patient safety not to mention worker safety – with bullying and harassment and the treatment of whistleblowers; lip service is being paid to equality and diversity, and race equality remains a utopia; and our regulatory system seems broken, with neither professional nor systems regulators able to protect staff or patients, for example.

We need a new and reformed NHS and to my mind there are two basic, inviolable design features:

1. "It is the patient, stupid" – with the patient at the centre of the health and social care system
2. "Quality as the organising principle" with quality being used in its widest sense of patient safety, clinical effectiveness and patient experience, as Darzi review suggested.

Repealing the H & SC Act and the Reinstatement Bill, if (and I very much hope so) they come to pass, then there will still be a lot of work needed to create a fit for purpose 21st century NHS. And central to all this will be clinical engagement and leadership. I look forward to hearing from the medical and other professional bodies about how they see things, and to working on developing the necessary clinical leadership.

Also, having remained non-aligned politically all my life, I have begun to wonder whether this is right, and should I consider becoming a part of the political system by joining a party. I am going to seriously think about it in the next few weeks.

I suppose many of us had personal reasons for marching too – not quite the existential crisis but it has been useful for reflecting on life and to thinking about personal growth. According to Hindu tradition, there are four stages of life:

1. Bharmacharya (student life)
2. Grihastha (household life)
3. Vanaprastha (retired life) and
4. Sannyasa (renounced life)

I am in my Vanaprastha stage, and realised that I have a lot of unfinished personal business. I need to correct, if I can, things that went wrong and I need to get better as a person for the future. To some extent the march afforded the time to try and put into practice the best advice I have heard (translated from an Urdu couplet).

“With great difficulty I finally found peace

I forgave some and sought forgiveness from others”

I have certainly forgiven some, as I cannot afford to carry the baggage anymore, and I hope others will forgive me too. And that together we can move forward for the betterment of society, and for our own peace of mind.

I certainly feel a sense of peace, and I also feel tremendously energised – there are some really good people out there and there is a will and determination to change, and improve things - so Carpe Diem.

And most of all THANK YOU, THANK YOU for saving the NHS and for saving my soul.



The 300 mile feet



Setting off from St Albans



Too many causes



Reception in Edmonton

Rajan Madhok

5 September 2014

Further reading and 'Bragging'

<https://www.hsj.co.uk/comment/why-i-went-on-the-300-mile-march-to-save-the-nhs/5074587.article>

<https://asianlite.com/news/uk-news/peoples-march-to-save-nhs/>

If nothing else, yes we did get the £1 at the rally in Trafalgar Square, I got to meet Billy Bragg!





Walking in London –on the final leg



Rally in Trafalgar Square



My mates



The photo op – great and the good