

## 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.



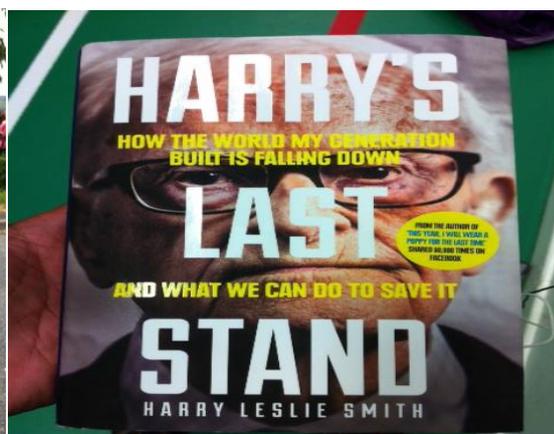
*Angus and Pat's home*



*RIP Glapwell colliery*



*Why we need to save the NHS*



*The hero*



*And the pampered!*

**Rajan Madhok**

**27 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](http://www.leadershipforhealth.com)