

## 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*

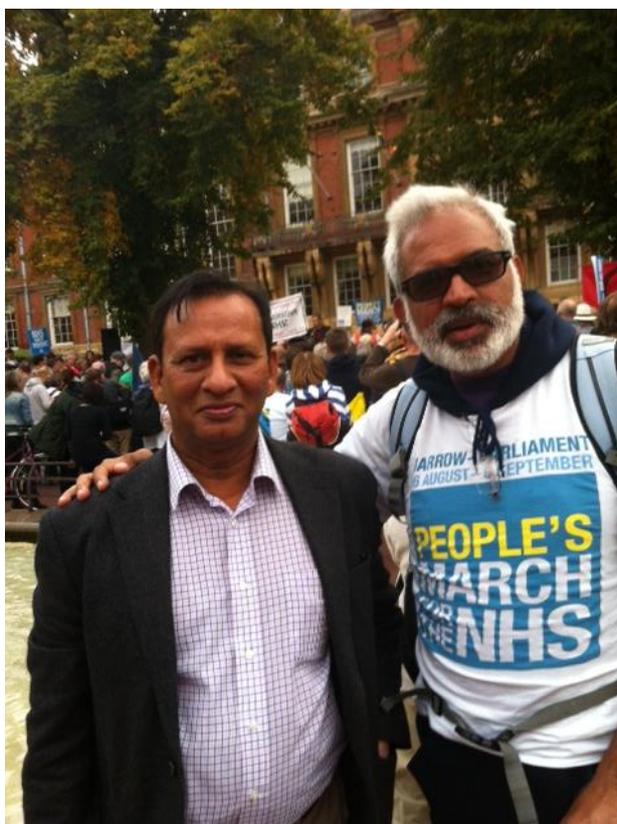


*Indian Workers Association colleagues*



*Lunch time*

*Dr Louise Irvine*



*Umesh Roy- who is always there for me*

**Rajan Madhok**

**30 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)