

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 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

Rajan Madhok

21 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