

## 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*

**Rajan Madhok**

**22 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)